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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-52, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 1. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412. I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 1, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Scriptures quoted in this message are from the New American Standard Bible.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 1**

### ***Are Experiences a Valid Source of Truth?***

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**John F. MacArthur, Jr.**

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We are going to embark upon a study of the Charismatic movement, the contemporary Charismatic movement that surrounds us in the Evangelical Church. Back in 1977, to be exact, I preached a series on the movement, or maybe a little even before that year. But a book came from it which I spent 1977 writing. That book was entitled, "The Charismatics." And now we are about a dozen or more years beyond that publication, and I felt that it is time for an update. And from this series will come another book entitled, "Charismatic Chaos." I believe that book will be released sometime after the first of next year.

So many Christians are confused by the theology and the experiences of Charismatic people. And they have become so visible because of Christian television, radio, books, magazines, and because their ministries are so aggressive that we all are inundated by them through direct mail. Television and the media has spread this movement, it has created for them a tremendous platform. In fact, it is probably not far from the truth to say that most people would assume that Evangelical Christianity is what the Charismatic movement represents, because it is such an exposed movement.

But we must deal with it in line with 1 Thessalonians 5:21, and that is to examine it carefully, to determine what is true and what is not. Now as we embark upon this examination, I want you to know at the very outset, that I love my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, and I have no intent to convey anything other than love for them. I think in the movement there are many who are not genuinely saved, and I am equally concerned about their salvation. My purpose is not to debate them, pitting our theology against theirs, but to call them to the test of Scripture, to drop what Amos called the "plumb line," to see if they are straight with the Word of God.

I have to say at the very outset that a rather powerful intimidation factor works against those who wish to deal with this movement Biblically. To critique Charismatic doctrine or practice is commonly viewed as inherently unloving, inherently unkind, inherently divisive, and even blasphemous. I have personally been accused of blaspheming the Holy Spirit by calling this movement to the test of Scripture. Anybody who wants to answer the movement; to confront the movement; to measure it by Scripture; can be intimidated. Because it is very hard, then, to find a platform to speak about the movement. It runs almost rampant like wildfire.

Charismatic extremist can promote almost any idea they chose on television, or on radio, or in their books. And those who attempt to examine those in the light of Scripture are muzzled. I have been waiting for many years on one of these Charismatic Talk Shows to hear the host say, "That's not true; that is not true. That is not in the Word of God, we will not accept that. You cannot verify that by Scripture." That never happens, no matter what is said. It can be the most bizarre thing imaginable; it can be the most whimsical, the most self-generated interpretation of Scripture or experience, and no one ever stops and says, "Hold it! That's error; that's heresy; that's not true!"

The number one book on the Christian Book Selling List right now, this month, the latest one, is a misrepresentation of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is number one because so many Christians across America are buying it. It is not a time to speak against this movement unless you want some flak and so I am getting ready for it, I guess. But I am duty bound to assess everything according to the Word of God.

Our radio program, "Grace to You," is heard on a network of 200 stations, being broadcast about 600 different times a day, and there are satellites that take it to even more stations. Nearly all of the stations that we are on and all of the broadcasting mediums that we use would share our doctrinal perspective; they would share our doctrinal commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture. Yet, most of them "back out" at broadcasting any series on passages that confront Charismatic error. Most of them would agree not only on the sufficiency of Scripture, but they would probably even agree on our theology with regard to the Holy Spirit, Signs, Wonders, Miracles, and Tongues, but they simply do not want to offend.

Here is a typical letter, and I am quoting, written to us,

"Please reconsider your policy of dealing with the Charismatic movement and other controversial topics on your radio broadcasts. Though we share your convictions on these issues, many of our listeners do not. These people are dear brothers and sisters in Christ and we do not feel that it is helpful to the cause

of Christ to attack what they believe. We are committed to keeping peace among brethren and unity in the Body of Christ. Thank you for being sensitive to these concerns."

"It is not helpful to the cause of Christ to attack error anymore," that's what it says. "It is not helpful to these dear brothers and sisters in Christ to attack what they believe, even though it is wrong." It is more helpful, under this philosophy, "to let them remain in error." "We are committed to keeping peace, even if peace means error, and finding unity even if unity means heresy. Thank you for being sensitive to our desire to maintain heresy if it must be maintained for the sake of unity!"

Apparently, these people, while being "Dear Brothers and Sisters," are not dear enough to deserve to be taught the truth. Does real Christian love leave them in a spiritually debilitating error, thus out of God's will and out of the place of blessing, misrepresenting God's sacred truth? Is that love that calls us to do that? But this is the kind of thinking that pervades the Church. In effect, it has given Charismatic extremists the freedom to propound fantastic views while imposing a code of silence on all who object.

The legacy of such an attitude is not unity, and the legacy of such an attitude is not peace, believe me; it is confusion, it is turmoil, and it is chaos. How so? Churches, Mission Agencies, Schools, and other Christian organizations that have tried to maintain unity by not confronting Charismatic influence, and thus allowing it to come in never to be dealt with, ultimately will all have to sacrifice their Non-Charismatic position or split the organization. It does not bring unity, it brings the exact opposite. Because, inevitably, you have the "haves," the Charismatics who feel that they have reached a higher level, and the "have nots." And you have pitted two theologies against each other. One gives in or it splits.

It is not unkind to analyze Christians' doctrinal difference in the light of Scripture. That is not unkind; that is kind. We have a mandate from God to do this, even if it involves rebuking certain people by name because they are so well known. The Apostle Paul writing in Philippians 4 says, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord." And then he says, "True comrade, help those women." He identifies two cantankerous, troublemaking, disagreeable women in the congregation who were to be publicly rebuked for all times, for their names have occupied a place in the permanent record.

In 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul identifies Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom he had delivered over to Satan, that they may be taught not to blaspheme. In 2 Timothy 2:17, he identified Hymenaeus and Philetus, who gone astray from the truth and made up some kind of Spiritual resurrection, upsetting the faith of some. In 3 John, that little epistle, he identifies another man, by the name of Diotrephes, "who loves to be first among them, and does not accept what we say."

When it comes down to the integrity of the Church, and when it comes down to what is right and what is true, the Scripture will even name people publicly and for the record, to be eternally embedded in the pages of Scripture, who stand in the way of the movement of truth. Real love and real unity, and real peace, are bound up with truth. Love apart from truth is hypocritical sentimentality. And that kind of thing is frankly at an epidemic level. A kind of sentimentality that does not want to confront truth. But

remembering again the words of Ephesians 4:15, "we are to speak the truth in love." That is how the body "grows up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ."

Criticizing the Charismatic movement by Scriptural comparison should be welcomed since truth that pleases God is the only concern that is valid. Now, my purpose is not to mock; my purpose is simply to correct. In my first book I was accused of using bizarre examples; that was not true. But some accused me of using bizarre examples of the Charismatic movement. As I have accumulated data over the past number of years since that first book, and in going through that data more recently, I find that what we have now is even more bizarre, and yet still commonplace. More visible now, more common now with no end in sight.

When I was driving through the city of Dallas on Friday, I noticed a number of huge billboards on all sides of the city as I was trekking back and forth in meetings. And they were advertising the name of a man, Robert Tilton. Robert Tilton preaches every Sunday in Dallas, and he will mail you a miracle coin which by the way, is actually worthless; but it is a miracle coin. He has mailed them to hundreds of thousands of people promising them a financial miracle if they will send him, quote, "A check for the best possible gift you can give." And then there is a reminder in this mailing, quote, "Only you and God know what your best gift is." A little intimidation there, and if you will send for him the best gift you can give, you will get a miracle coin that guarantees you a miracle. A Secular paper calls Tilton's Television program, quote, "The fastest growing empire in religious television." The things that he promises and says are absolutely bizarre, and yet the bizarre has become the commonplace.

An associate of mine attended a Charismatic Businessmen's meeting in Chicago, where a Catholic Priest testified that Mary, the mother of Jesus, had given him the gift of tongues while he was saying his rosary. Then the Charismatic pastor, leading the meeting, rose and said, and I quote, "What an amazing testimony that is. Aren't you glad that God isn't bound by any ideas by what's doctrinally acceptable? Some people would try to dismiss this brother's testimony just because it doesn't jibe with their doctrinal system, but how you get filled with the Holy Ghost doesn't matter, as long as you know that you have got the Baptism. Even if you got it from Mary while saying your rosary, it has to be legitimate." The audience, by the way, numbering in the hundreds, broke into wild affirmation and applause.

It is too easy to say that any critique of this movement is unfair and unkind. It is too easy to say that and silence the Non-Charismatic, and leave people in confusion, and let the movement spread unchecked even more and more and more and then become exempt from Biblical criticism. Beloved, I want to tell you that it is all over the globe. All over the globe. Everywhere I go in the world I find that they have been making massive inroads.

I was talking to a man in our church this morning who had for a number of years worshiped here and then had returned to his native Scotland, living just out of Edinburgh. And I said, "Have you found a church?" And he said, "Well, yes we have." And I said, "Is it one of the Scottish Baptist Churches (knowing that most of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches are long gone liberal, with of course some exceptions)? He said, "No, it is not a Baptist Church. For the most part, most of the Baptist Churches

have moved into the Charismatic Movement. Scotland.

It is a major problem in Eastern Europe and will continue to be one. It is a problem in Australia. It is a problem in Asia. It is a problem of massive proportions in Latin America. It is everywhere, confusing millions of people. The Russian Church now is waiting patiently for the finishing of this book, and they want the manuscript even before the American Publisher publishes it because they desperately need it translated into the Russian Language and distributed immediately in the Soviet Union because of the rampant confusion about these matters.

Fantastic encounters with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are claimed as commonplace; personal messages from God are routine; healings of all kinds are claimed; miracles occur, everything from puppies being raised from the dead; wash machines being healed; empty gas tanks and teeth are filled not with the same thing); people are slain in the Holy Spirit; people go to Heaven and go to Hell--comeback. There are some today who even say that the Church can't do effective evangelism without such phenomena, without such signs and wonders and miracles. The gospel, they say, is weak without signs and wonders and this is the emphasis, by the way, of what they call the Third Wave.

Charismatics say, "If you are not in the movement, then you have no right to evaluate the movement." Howard Ervin (sp.), a Baptist pastor wrote some years ago, quote,

"The attempt to interpret the Charismatics manifestations of the Holy Spirit, without a Charismatic experience is as fatuous as the application of the Christian ethic apart from a regenerate dynamic. Understanding of spiritual truth is predicated upon spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit does not reveal spiritual secrets to the uncommitted."

There is the ploy they use, "Well, we would expect you to be against it since you haven't had the experience." That is Gnosticism. That is believing that you have been elevated to a higher level of comprehension which the uninitiated have no understanding. Rodman Williams, who has written a number of books and who was once the president of a local Charismatic school, and I quote said, "Any vital information concerning the Gifts of the Spirit, the Pneumatic Charismata, predisposes a participation in them. Without such a participation, whatever is said about the Gifts may only result in confusion and error." If you haven't had it, you have no right to talk about it. One pastor said to me, "You talk exactly like one who never had the experience. You are speaking out of ignorance." I wonder if they feel that way talking about Heaven, Hell, murder, adultery, homosexuality, and numerous other subjects. Do we have to have that experience too?

My experience and your experience is not the test or proof of Biblical truth, it is the reverse--Biblical truth must validate or invalidate any experience. Doctrinally, it is almost impossible to define the Charismatic movement. It almost resists theology. It resists categorization because it has such a wide and growing spectrum of viewpoints. If they don't rightly divide the Word of God they are not going to come to a proper Systematic Theology. If they determine what is true because of their own experiences then there is no limit to the theology; it will take whatever form experience takes. And so what you have is a

very amorphous kind of volatile changing systems of beliefs that ebbs and flows and rises and falls and refuses to find any structure.

The Charismatic movement is achieving, by the way, what the liberal Ecumenical movement tried for years to achieve, and that is a unity that is indifferent to doctrinal truth. And so I say there is intimidation as we approach this study because we are not supposed to have the right to do this, since we haven't had the experience. We are not supposed to do it because it isn't loving and it isn't gracious and it doesn't make for unity. And so, I just want you to know that I acknowledge the effort to intimidate, and I reject that. I do not believe, furthermore, that I have to have some kind of experiences in order to understand what the Bible says about them. I haven't walked on water, but I can understand what it says when it says that Jesus did.

Doctrinally, we must have structure, we must have sound doctrine. We cannot fall prey to a system that resists any doctrinal categorization. But see, once you allow experience to be the test of truth, then you can't limit doctrine to the pages of Scripture.

Now, just a brief history. Historically, the Charismatic movement is the child of the Pentecostal movement. That began about 1900 and it went along for about 60 years and the Pentecostal Churches were primarily the Assemblies of God, the Four Square Church, and then there were some other smaller groups, the United Pentecostal group and so forth. But they were basically off to themselves. People used to call them the "Holy Rollers." They were a kind of a unique group that did not mainstream at all in Evangelical Christianity because of their strange beliefs.

In 1960 a remarkable thing happened. In 1960, not far from here, in Saint Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, Rector Dennis Bennett supposedly got the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And what happened was Pentecostalism jumped out of its own box and landed in Episcopalianism, and for the first time it transcended its denominational definitions. Since that time it has moved through the major denominations like a flood. It went beyond historical Pentecostal denominations and has continued to do that. That second movement is called the Charismatic Movement. They borrowed that concept of Charismatic because it is associated with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the believer.

But the Charismatic Movement can't be defined doctrinally. Why? Because it involves Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, anybody and everybody. So it resists, and has resisted any kind of doctrinal definition that is too rigid. What they all hold in common is an experience which they will call the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And they wrongly define the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as a post salvation experience that adds something to your Christian life that you previously didn't have, and is usually accompanied by signs and wonders, most particularly speaking in tongues. And we are going to talk much more about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Tongues at a later time. But once you have had that experience, you have sort of jumped into this new level of spiritual awareness, and you have reached the level of the Charismatic.

Without this experience, a Christian is second class. So, you have the "spiritual haves" and the "spiritual

have notes." I remember being sent a tape of a "talk radio program" by Walter Martin, when he was still alive, and he was interviewing Rodman Williams at the time; and for some reason they got to talking about me because I had written a book on the Charismatics (and both of them were certainly favorable to the Charismatic movement) and they were discussing what I had said in the book and how that I really didn't understand the movement. And Rodman Williams, on the tape said, "Well I'll tell you one thing, I don't know who this man is but God will never bless his life or his ministry." And there was a moment of silence, to which Walter Martin simply replied, because he knew me and he knew the ministry, "I think you have gone too far in saying that!"

But the bottom line is, that's what they have to say because if you haven't reached that second level, then you are not participating in the fullness of the Spirit of God. That's very intimidating to some Christians. No miracles in your life, no spectacular revelations, Jesus never comes and talks to you, no signs, no wonders: What's wrong with you?

I am convinced that these experiences are real in the sense that maybe they have some emotional reaction or maybe there is something that they are feeling at the time, but that they do not follow a Biblical pattern, they are not authored by God, and they do not lift someone to a higher level. Now what that means then, is that since they are not really true in terms of moving people into genuine spirituality, since they do not increase your understanding of the Word or your true knowledge of God they lead then to the need to exaggerate, dramatize, or even invent experiences just to keep up with everybody's expectations and just to be spiritual.

One nationally known television Charismatic Evangelist was recently discovered using a hidden receiver in his ear, you remember that, a man named Poppoff (sp.) through which his wife was broadcasting information supposedly being revealed to him by the Holy Spirit as he stood in front of the audience. Another healer was using the same "phony plants" in the crowd, in every city, and rehealing the same bunch from city to city to city. Terrible sex scandals abound in the ostentatiously spirit filled Charismatic leaders circles. Sexual scandals seem epidemic and catastrophic. Admittedly, that can happen in any group but you would think it would happen less, not more, in those that have reached the higher level of spirituality, wouldn't you?

Such scandals reveal the fact that pursuing signs and pursuing wonders, chasing spectacular experiences and speaking in tongues and reaching some plane of esoteric mystical feelings has led some leaders not only to be fraudulent, to be fake, but to miss the path to true spirituality, and consequently to be on the path to moral disaster. You see, false standards of spirituality don't restrain the flesh. Fundamental teachings of the Charismatic movement create an emphasis on the external and they foster bogus claims and false prophets and other forms of what I guess we could call spiritual humbug.

Now, some of these people are sincere, but in the pursuit of experiences and emotions, and miracles, and signs and wonders, they begin to imagine all kinds of things and to falsify all kinds of things. And I also believe that Satan invades with his deceptions. Well, that just gives you a little feeling of what we are going to be dealing with. I want to ask one question tonight and briefly answer it, that will take us into

the flow of this subject.

The first and foremost thing for us to consider is this question, "Is experience a valid test of truth?" I know you know the answer to that, but I want to help frame it up so you can understand it fully. Is experience a valid test of truth?

A woman wrote to me seething with anger; this is what she said in her letter,

"You resort to Greek translations and fancy words to explain away what the Holy Spirit is doing in the Church today. Let me give you a piece of advice that might just save you from the wrath of the Almighty God. Put away your Bible and your books and stop studying. Ask the Holy Ghost to come upon you and give you the gift of tongues. You have no right to question something you've never experienced."

Such an attitude prevails in the movement, the tendency to gauge truth by personal experience. Now what about experience is there such a thing as a true spiritual experience? Sure. A true spiritual experience will be the result, listen carefully, will be the result of the quickening of truth in the Christian's mind. And I will sum it up that way and I don't know of any better way to say it. A true spiritual experience will be the result of the quickening of truth in the Christian's mind. In other words, the Spirit all of a sudden gives dramatic life to a truth. It does not occur in a mystical vacuum.

In an authentic spiritual experience there are emotions and feelings and senses, and I want you to know that I believe that and I understand that. I have some absolutely exhilarating spiritual experiences. And I have some very difficult experiences, very sad and heart wrenching experiences. And I am not talking about an emotional experience or an earthly experience, some kind of worldly thing. I am talking about a spiritual experience. I have them and I hope you have them. God has given us our emotions so that we can respond to His truth. But I do not have an experience that is godly, that leads me to truth in a vacuum. I have an experience in response to truth.

Let me show you what I mean. Here is one kind of spiritual experience: strong feelings of remorse over sin. Have you had that experience? You go along in life on a fairly even keel, you go along fairly happy and content and satisfied and you've got the ability to balance your sorrow with your joy, and sort of keep your head above water. But there are times in your life when you have felt strong remorse over your sin. That is an experience that was generated by the truth of the Word of God quickened to your heart by the Holy Spirit. Right? That was the case in Luke 18:13 where the man who was a publican, was in the corner of the Temple beating on his breast crying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Why? Having been exposed to the truth about his sin, his spirit was quickened and he had an experience of conviction. He had an experience of remorse. He had a tearful experience of repentance.

Another kind of spiritual experience you might have would be an almost inexplicable sense of trust in God in the midst of a traumatic situation. An almost inexplicable sense of trust in God, peace, calm, in the midst of a traumatic situation. I remember taking off in an airplane from LAX and when we were barely off the ground, maybe 100 feet, an engine blew up. Now that is what I call a traumatic situation.

We had to go in a circle, dump fuel over the ocean and come back and land again, and then get out and get another plane. But in the process, it was amazing the reality of the moment, the whole plane is shaking and everybody has heard the noise, everybody knows something dramatic has occurred, and to all of a sudden be literally overwhelmed. The first question that came into my mind was, "Lord, are you sure that this is the right plane? This is me, I am on this one, you know? That's my first response, and then I said, "No, no, the Lord knows, He's got an OAG guide, He knows the airline schedule.

In the middle of that kind of trauma, I was overcome with a mighty sense of trust in the sovereignty of God, and a perfect peace that came over me; and I began to anticipate the realities of Heaven. Maybe, maybe that is a common experience at some point in time, in the life of any faithful true believer. In Acts 16, it was that kind of experience that the Apostle Paul had with Silas. They were put in stocks, that means their limbs were stretched to the limit, and locked in at a stretched point. Their legs were pulled as far apart as they could go, like a wishbone and then stuck in the stocks and locked there, so that the muscle pain would be indescribable, unimaginable. Their arms the same way, and there they were locked awaiting their execution, and it says they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God. That's a spiritual experience where the Spirit of God has quickened to their hearts the great reality that their God is near, their God loves them, God is in control of everything, and that confidence gives them a song to sing in the night. That's an experience.

Maybe, maybe there are times when you have had an overpowering peace in the midst of trouble, that made your spirit totally calm like that. Certainly Paul had it. He said, "I have learned that in whatsoever state I am to be content." And he said, "If you just learn to go to the Lord with everything, He will give you perfect peace. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God," right? "Will grant to you His peace."

Even in the face of death there is an overwhelming joy and peace that can come over us. Stephen is there under the bloody stones as they crush out his life, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Don't blame them for this." Quietly he reposes in rests. And then there is that other kind of spiritual experience, that Paul had in Romans 9:1-3, where he said, "I have such a deep and profound longing and sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart for the salvation of Israel, that I could almost wished myself accursed, if it could mean their redemption." Have you had that experience? Have you ever wept over the lost?

I remember one time as a little boy, the first time it ever hit me. I was sitting in a campfire and I became overwhelmed after hearing a message about lost people. I think I was about 12, and I couldn't control the tears, and I just began to weep over the lostness of people. That was a spiritual experience, as the Spirit of God quickened to my heart something true from His Word--the lostness of man, the sovereignty of God in the midst of my trouble, the great peace that He gives, confidence in His care, repentance and remorse over my sin, all of those kinds of things.

On the other hand, Have you ever rejoiced to the point where you could almost not contain your joy because somebody you loved so much had come to Christ? That's a spiritual experience. Have you ever just contemplated the glory of God, and found yourself singing hymns to him in praise because you were

so exhilarated? Have you ever gone into a ministry and knowing that the Spirit of God was on you and you were going to go and preach His truth, and felt that you couldn't wait to get there, and when you got there you thought you might tear the pulpit to pieces because of the joy, the exhilaration of what you are about to do?

I don't want anybody to think for a moment that I don't have a spiritual experience. People sometimes think I'm sort of cold and calculating, but I am very emotional about those things. Spiritual experience by definition is an internal feeling. It is an internal feeling that involves strong emotion in response to God's truth, amplified by the Spirit and applied to me personally. That's a true spiritual experience.

Now what is a false spiritual experience? That's the experience that supposedly leads me to the truth. This must be true because look what I experienced. That's backwards! The Charismatic movement errors because it tends to build its teaching on experiences, as John Wimber (sp.) said, "We are cataloging all of our experiences so we can develop a theology." They do not understand that authentic experience happens in response to truth and anything that doesn't square up with the revealed truth of the Word of God is not authentic, not of God. Too many of their experiences are detached from truth and they lead to false conclusions.

I spent a couple of hours with a prominent, well known, Charismatic pastor last Sunday afternoon. I asked him a number of questions, and every time I asked him a question he answered me with an experience. Visions, dreams, prophecies, words of knowledge, private messages from God, are the real authority in that movement. And Scripture, when used at all, is typically employed for proof texts or twisted to fit some novel opinion. And many Scriptures, beloved, are literally mauled.

Kenneth Copeland was teaching on Mark 10, The Rich Young Ruler, and of course Kenneth Copeland teaches that Jesus wants everybody rich. Jesus wants everybody healthy, wealthy, prosperous--big house, big car, big wardrobe, big bank account. It's hard to teach that from the Rich Young Ruler because Jesus said to him, "Sell all you have, give to the poor, come and follow Me." It doesn't fit too well in that text. So how's he going to handle it? Well, he twisted the text to make it seem to say that God wants His people wealthy. Jesus' words in verse 21 are very clear, Mark 10, "One thing you lack: go and sell all possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." "Turn in your worldly treasure for heavenly treasure." Here's Copeland's comment and I quote, "This is the biggest financial deal that young man had ever been offered, but he walked away from it because he didn't know God's system of finance." What? What he is trying to imply there is that if he had given away everything God would have made him richer. It doesn't say that.

The claims these people make just go on and on. I don't know if you read about Percy Colette (sp.) a Charismatic Medical Missionary, claims that in 1982 he was transported to Heaven for five and a half days. A newsletter describes the story,

While Christianity abounds with accounts of glimpses of the other dimension from those who have had out of body experiences, Dr. Colette's is unlike these. Obviously, he was caught up in the third heaven

even as Paul was, the difference being, Paul was not allowed to utter the things he saw and heard, while Dr. Colette was. Colette offers video tapes detailing his sojourn in Heaven and his accounts are peculiar indeed. Quote, "Everything God created on the earth is in Heaven, Horses, cats, dogs. Everything that He created on earth is in Heaven, in the way of animals, only these are perfect. For example, the dogs don't bark."

Further, he says, "You don't need plumbing. You can go to the Banqueting House and eat all you want and no plumbing is needed." Colette then describes the "Pity Department." The "Pity Department" is place the souls of aborted babies go and also some severely retarded babies and it here that these little souls are trained for a period of time before they go before the Throne of God.

Then he claims he saw the "Record Room," an immense area where all to idle words spoken by Christians are being retained until after Christians give an account of them or are judged, at which time these will be emptied into the "Sea of Forgetfulness." Colette then describes the "Garment Room," where angels are sewing our robes, and Mansions under construction. And he found the "Holy Ghost Elevator" and many other astonishing sights.

He adds one more detail, "While I was traveling back to earth, I saw two girls, one brunette and one a redhead. We stopped to talk to them, that is their 'soul bodies' on the way back. We had asked them what had happen to them? And they indicated that they had gotten killed in a car accident on the California Highway and their physical bodies were in a funeral home. They said their mother was weeping over them, so would I please tell her they were ok?" Dr. Colette feels that he has conclusive proof to verify that tale. "About a year later I went to that area where the mother lived and was giving this testimony, a mother jumped up in the congregation and said that's a description of my daughters! I told her she shouldn't fret, that her daughters are in that wonderful place, we saw them on the way to Heaven." She said, "She would never cry again."

After Dr. Colette lectured on Heaven to his third straight standing room audience in Montgomery, Alabama, he offered to take questions from the floor. The first question was something I admit I had never contemplated. The question was, "I'm a Cowboy, will there be Rodeos in Heaven?" Dr. Colette was ready with an answer, "There are horses in Heaven, beautiful horses, they are all praising God, there is no foolishness in Heaven. I am not saying that a Rodeo is foolish, but there is no Will Rodgers style acting up there."

Just the silliness of these kinds of things that find their way into print. By the way excursions to Heaven and back have become almost chic in that movement, the ultimate experience for those who want something unusual, and many say that they have made the trip. On April 11, 1977, a Charismatic television network in Los Angeles, carried an interview with Dr. Richard Ebee (sp.) who claimed to have died gone to Heaven and come back again. According to Dr. Ebee he fell off a balcony, struck his head and was supposedly dead. He reported,

"He experienced Paradise. His formerly weak eyes needed no glasses, now he could see for a hundred

miles. His body took a wonderful quality, he could move anywhere at will, he was visible yet transparent. Dr. Ebee said he found some flowers, broke them off and noticed they had no water in their stems because Jesus is the Living Water. The aroma of Heaven was especially overwhelming with the sweet savor of sacrifices, Ebee said. He discussed the fact that the human brain has twelve cranial nerves and then added that those twelve nerves represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Furthermore, he said that the number one nerve in God's cranium is the sense of smell. Ebee said he learned that the whole purpose of sacrifice was to send a sweet aroma up to Heaven to satisfy God's main cranial nerve."

In regard, by the way, in regard to that kind of silliness, in regard to the twelve cranial nerves representing the twelve tribes of Israel, it would be just about as reasonable to say, "That because you have ten toes, the bottom half of your body has the image of the Beast mentioned in Daniel, chapter 2 and chapter 7." By the way, I checked with a medical doctor on the twelve cranial nerves, and found that actually there are twelve pairs, which makes twenty four, so perhaps it would be better to say that they correspond to the twenty four elders.

And I know that it is hard to resist chuckling at these things because they are so foolish. The reason we chuckle is because we know that it is so far fetched, so strange. But you see, Charismatics have no way to judge and they have no way to stop those kinds of things. They can't stop that because the system validates experience, and the truth rises from the experience. And so they spend their time trying to get the Bible to fit their experience.

Dudley Danielson, in the "National Courier," a Charismatic newspaper, ran an ad. This is the ad,

"A Genuine Photograph of the Lord! Yes, I believe I have one recorded on film. In mid-summer I awoke at 3:30 am to a strong voice thought impression, 'Go and photograph my sunrise.' Beside the river I set up my camera; waited for the sun, and that predawn I felt so very close to God, perfect peace. On one negative is the perfect shape of a figure, arms raised in blessing, as reflected in the water, exactly opposite every other shadow. I believe God gave me an image of Himself to share."

The item is signed Dudley Danielson, Photographer, and you can get a picture of God for only \$9.95. Doesn't seem to bother Dudley that the Bible says, "No man has seen God at any time." Nor does it appear to matter to him that the Bible says that, "God is spirit," and "No man can see me and live." It's no different than people who think they see Jesus on a Pizza Billboard. Such extreme examples are not uncommon. In the November 1990 issue of Charisma Magazine, which is the most popular magazine in the movement, there is a claim made by a lady named Aline Baxley (sp.), an ex-alcoholic and drug addict, who says she has been to Hell and God brought her back to tell her story.

Experience after experience is reported in the Charismatic press, television, radio. A subtle but sinister pattern is developing. Instead of responding to a proper interpretation of God's Holy Word, Christianity is collecting preposterous tales producing a pseudo-Christian mysticism that's more like Hinduism and the New Age, than it is Biblical Christianity. And that's why I quoted the woman who wrote me and said, "Put away your Bible, your books and stop studying." Feelings are more important than the eternal Word

of God. Intuition surpasses interpretation. This is a tragic thing.

Now in a quick conclusion. When we turn to the Scripture, does the Scripture validate experience as the proper source for truth? Look at 2 Peter, and I'll just give you a couple of Scriptures because we have covered these. In 2 Peter 1:16, Peter says, "We did not follow cunningly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased.'--and we ourselves heard this utterance made from Heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." Stop at that point.

Peter says, "Look, I going to write in this Second Epistle about the Second Coming of Christ. I am going to write about His coming glory, His coming majesty, and I want you to know that I am not talking about something that I don't know about, because this is not some tale that God passed down. I was an eyewitness along with the other Apostles of His Second Coming Power and Glory." When did you see it? "On the mountain." What mountain? "The Mount of" what? "Transfiguration."

Matthew 17, Jesus took the disciples into a mountain and He was transfigured before them, and they saw the Shekinah Glory of God. We saw it! We were there! And the voice out of heaven, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." That is an amazing experience, an amazing experience. Peter said, "I had an experience, I saw the glorified Christ in His Second Coming Majesty. I saw the Shekinah Glory shining through Him, I heard the voice of God saying, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.'" You could make a career today just going around telling that experience. But look what he says, verse 19, "But we have a more sure word of prophecy." We have the even surer prophetic word, is the proper translation.

What is more sure than experience? The Word! Peter's point is precisely the issue that many Charismatics fail to understand. The pilgrimage from experience to experience, more and more spectacular is not only frustrating, it is counter productive spiritually. Peter says, "I had an experience, a real one. But I have a more sure word than my own senses. I can't even trust my own senses in a real experience of seeing the glory of Christ. And so he says, "We have a more sure word and you do well to pay attention to that as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." Until Christ comes in His day, you better stick with the Word because, verse 20 says, "It didn't come by any private interpretation. It isn't somebody's experience. It isn't somebody's emotion. It isn't what somebody feels. "No, no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

If you want human experience articulated, you can have it. Peter says, I'll take the more sure word, the Word of God, not of human origin, not of human interpretation, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. I'll take God's Word over your word or even mine. Peter was no Charismatic, no Charismatic.

Psalms 19, another Scripture that must be dealt with. In Psalm 19:7-9, the Psalmist writes, "The law of the lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts

of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether." You have six titles for Scripture; it is called the "Law of the Lord;" the "Testimony of the Lord;" the "Precepts of the Lord;" the "Commandment of the Lord;" the "Fear of the Lord;" and the "Judgments of the Lord." Two of those in each of those three verses. Psalm 19:7-9.

Now, you'll notice this, he is talking then about the Scripture. He sees it as law. It is God's Law for man's conduct. He sees it as testimony. It's God's personal testimony to who He is. He sees it as precepts, principles for life. He sees it as commandment; it is binding. He sees it as fear; that is instruction on worship. He sees it as judgment, or verdicts from the divine bench on the destiny of man. Scripture is all of that, but notice what the Scripture is in terms of its character. It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true. You can trust it. All six of those characteristics. It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true. And it will restore the soul, make wise the simple, rejoice the heart, enlighten the eyes, endure forever, and produce comprehensive righteousness.

That's why Jesus said, "If they don't believe the Word of God that came through the prophets, they won't believe even though someone," what? "Is raised from the dead." He was and they didn't believe. Miracles don't make people believe. Signs and wonders don't make people believe, they never did. If a man does not believe the Word, he is not going to believe some experience.

Look at John, chapter 14, and see what Jesus said about whether experience is the issue. John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.'" Do a miracle! Show us God! Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and you haven't come to know Me Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father." What are you saying, "Show us the Father for?" In other words, I have told you all you need to know. You don't need a sign and a wonder. You don't need some mystical and ecstatic vision of God. I've told you all you need to know! I've demonstrated it in my life and my teaching.

Paul was no Charismatic either, believe me. Paul was no Charismatic. He made divine truth the beginning and the ending of his ministry. It was the preaching of the truth revealed to him by the Spirit of God. Acts 17:2, "According to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.'" He was explaining the Scripture, he was delineating the Scripture. He had an experience. He went to Heaven! But God said, "You are not allowed to," what? "You're not allowed to talk about it!" "I don't want anybody basing anything on your interpretation, on your experience." Paul never built his ministry on his visions, his experiences. He built it on what he knew was the revealed truth of God, and he called into question any experience that violated Scripture.

The end of his ministry in the 28th chapter of Acts, we find him at his lodging, and people were there in

large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. He was in the Scripture trying to prove the truth from the pages of the Word of God.

Charismatics, like Jews of Paul's day have zeal without knowledge. Enthusiasm without enlightenment. They are often approaching truth without their minds, without thinking. Some even claim that God deliberately gives people unintelligible tongues in order to bypass and thus humble the proud human intellect. Beloved this is a serious and tragic error. Clark Pinock (sp.) once said, "We cannot allow these people to draw their theology out of their experience. Whenever the existential cart is put before the historical horse theology becomes a synthesis of human superstition and putting LSD into the communion is fair play."

Anything to induce an experience. Christianity is in serious danger, victimized by the experiential spirit of the day, the legacy of mysticism. It must be tested by the Word of God. We are going to do our best to do that. At least you know from the start that experience is not the valid test for truth--the Word is. And your experience flows out of the ministry of the Spirit through the Word to your life.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for letting us cover these things tonight and there is so much that could have been said. We thank you Lord that we can take a stand where your Word does in love. We ask you to help us to do that faithfully as we go through these things, remembering that not all we say is true of all the folks in the Charismatic movement, but these are the general trends. We thank you for those in that movement who are doing their best to adhere to the truth, to search your Scriptures, and we pray that you will lead them to a full understanding of your truth. Help us to be loving even as we pass these things on and yet to confront error so we might be faithful to you. In Christ's Name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-53, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 2. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 2, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Scriptures quoted in this message are from the New American Standard Bible.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 2**

# ***Does God Still Give Revelation Today?***

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I want to just preface the message tonight, really a study of an issue rather than a text, which is a little unfamiliar to us as normally we are in certain texts of Scripture. But I want to preface it with just a couple of comments. First of all, I want to say that I am very much aware of the fact that not everyone who is associated with the Charismatic movement is engaged in the kind of extreme error that we will be from time to time referring to. There are people who are more moderate. There are people within the Charismatic movement who themselves are very, very concerned about the heresies and the aberrations that exists within that movement. And so the movement runs quite a wide gamut and there are people at all different points.

However, there are some salient features and elements in the movement that we are endeavoring to deal with and illustrate to you. But again, I ask you to keep in mind that not everyone in the movement would affirm all these things. There are various and sundry different kinds of viewpoints. To reinforce that, there are, according to current statistics, 382 million members of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches worldwide, or 1 out of every 5 Christians. So when we talk about a widespread movement, indeed it is

the case. They gain about 19 million members per year and they donate about 34 billion dollars to Christian causes. It is a formidable group. The movement now includes 11,000 Pentecostal and 3,000 Independent Charismatic denominations covering 7,000 languages, and two-thirds of all Charismatics live in the Third World. It is a worldwide movement. And thus it demands our attention.

Now tonight as we come to the second in our series on Charismatic Chaos, the issue at hand is, "Does God still give revelation?" That's our subject for tonight: Does God still give revelation?

If someone were to write an anthem for the Charismatic movement it would have to be titled, "God told me! God told me!" you hear that over and over again. Strange prophecies abound in the Charismatic movement; in fact, it is well nigh impossible to turn on a Charismatic television station or a radio station without being exposed, almost on a daily basis to some new "Words from the Lord." I was watching one today and sure enough, "The Lord said, the Lord said, the Lord said," was repeated again and again.

This week I listened to a very fascinating tape by a man by the name of James Ryle. In his tape he tells about the fact that God gives him revelation through dreams, and that God revealed to him in this incredible dream, which I listened to him explain,

"Pictures of guitars, blue guitars, iridescent blue guitars." And then in the dream God showed him amplifiers, and then God told him that, "The guitars and the amplifiers belong to the Beatles." And God told him that, "The Church will win the world to salvation when it goes into the world and sings anointed music like the Beatles." The tape is filled with statements, "The Lord said, the Lord said, the Lord said, the Lord said." And here are some quotes, "The Lord said, 'I called those four lads from Liverpool to myself. There was a call from God on their lives. They were gifted by my hand and it was I who anointed them (speaking of the Beatles). The purpose was to usher in the Charismatic Renewal with musical revival around the world.'"

Then the Lord said, "The four lads from Liverpool went AWOL and did not serve in my army. They served their own purposes and gave the gift to the other side." And then the Lord said, "I lifted the anointing and for twenty years I've held it in my hand and I am about to release it again." And then the Lord said, "It doesn't belong to the world, it belongs to the Church." And then the Lord said, "I will release an anointing in music that will take the world by storm like the Beatles when they first came. New, anointed music that will capture men's hearts." And then the Lord said, "The same kind of reaction that the Beatles extracted will come, only this time the girls will not scream, Ringo, John, George, or Paul, they will scream, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."

Did the Lord say that? Did the Lord say any of that? He says he did. Surely the most famous of all the Lord's speaking to Charismatics is the famous, "Oral Roberts Death Threat Prophecy" a preposterous and fabricated supposed "Word from the Lord." Roberts told his nationwide audience in 1987 that God had threatened to call him home if he couldn't raise 8 million dollars by his creditor's deadline. Whether or how that threat might have been carried out the world will never know because Roberts received a last minute reprieve in the form of a large check from a Florida dog track owner, as you remember. Two

years later when Roberts was forced to close his massive, multi-million dollar City of Faith Medical Center anyway, in spite of the 8 million dollars, he asked God, "Why?" And Oral Roberts said God spoke to him and God said,

"I had you build the City of Faith large enough to capture the imagination of the entire world, about the merging of My healing streams of Prayer and Medicine. I did not want this revelation localized in Tulsa, however, and the time has come when I want this concept of merging My healing streams to be known to all people and to go into all future generations." So said God. Roberts said, "It is clearly in my spirit, as I have ever heard Him, the Lord gave me an impression, 'You and your partners have merged prayer and medicine for the entire world, for the Church World and for all generations.' And then He said, 'It is done.' And then I asked, 'Is that why after eight years you are having us close the hospital and after eleven years the medical school?' And God said, 'Yes, the mission has been accomplished in the same way that after three years of public ministry, my Son said on the cross, Father, it is finished!'"

Putting yourself in company with Jesus Christ is a bold move. That kind of arrogance almost makes us catch our breath. I recently had the opportunity to stand on the dandelion patch that now surrounds the City of Faith Medical Center in Tulsa. A sixty floor building next to a thirty floor building. An absolutely unbelievable edifice rising out of the midst of nothing, in the outskirts of this city. A monument to a man's folly and certainly no testimony to the character and the quality and the power of God, for it stands empty and unfinished, wasted.

The arrogance that causes people to think that God talks to them and puts themselves on a plane with even Jesus Christ and His work is amazing. But Oral Roberts is not the only Charismatic who thinks he's receiving private revelation from God. Most Charismatics, at one time or another, feel that God speaks to them in some specific way. Either through an audible voice, some kind of internal impression, a dream (and that's kind of a new one), a vision, or a prophesy.

Linda Fell (sp.), founder of Rapha Ranch (sp.), sells a tape, a song she was given by the Holy Spirit as she was being healed of cancer. An editor for a Christian publisher once told me that he receives submissions every week from Charismatics who claim God inspired them to write their book, article, song or poem. My editor friend noted that these manuscripts are often poorly written, filled with bad grammar, marred by factual and logical errors, or full of poems that mutilate the language or attempt to rhyme but just miss. And these are supposed to be authored by the Holy Spirit? Lest you think that cranks and obscure eccentrics or naive Charismatic believers are the only ones who would make such claims, you need to know that's not the case.

Even Jack Heyford (sp.), who is very near to us, and would be known even among Charismatics is a man of honor and integrity and a man who believes the Scripture, recently told the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America that God had revealed to him that a new era is coming. He related a vision, in which he had seen Jesus seated on His throne at the right hand of the Father. And in his vision, Jesus began to lean forward and rise from His seat, and as the anointing caught in the folds of His garment and it began to splash out and fall over the Church, and then Jesus said, "I'm beginning to rise now in preparation for My

Second Coming, those who will rise with me will share in this double portion of anointing." This is a private revelation that Jesus' Second Coming is near.

Larry Lee, popular Charismatic preacher, wrote, "Recently, I was in Chicago preparing to preach and the Lord's Spirit came upon me." He spoke, "I am going to tell you now the name of the strong man over this nation. The spiritual strong man that you are facing, the demonic strong man that has your nation under his control. It is the strong man of greed."

Now, the question is, "Did God talk to this man about the Beatles? Did God talk to Oral Roberts about the City of Faith? Did God write a song for Linda Feld? Did Jack Heyford actually see Christ rise from His seat and get ready for His Second Coming? Was Larry Lee's prophecy really a word from the Lord? Are we to believe that that is revelation?" One television evangelist claims that he had a seven hour conversation with Jesus Christ. Seven hours. And during that time they talked about the problems on earth and discussed decisions which he, the evangelist, was facing. And Jesus was trying to help him work out some of these decisions. Significantly, this man also has said he had some direct encounters with Satan, who has tried to choke the preacher in his bed. Unfortunately, the man doesn't see the connection between the two events. It seems to me that Jesus appearing to him was nothing different than the manifestation of a demonic spirit who took the name of Jesus Christ and was very likely the same spirit that wanted to choke him. Certainly, there is no way to tell the difference in that kind of mystical experience.

Spirits who claim to be Jesus Christ abound in my limited experience. I have even heard them take His name myself, and say they are Jesus Christ when it is apparent that they are not. Anyone who seeks direct communication with God or Christ is in serious danger of demonic impersonators of deity.

And there is another, even more basic issue than that, and that is, "Are Christians still receiving, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, direct revelation from God? Are we still getting it? Is God still talking?" Most Charismatics would say a loud and resounding yes.

One of their leaders, a theologian, by the name of Jay Rodman Williams, former president of one of their schools, wrote this, "The Bible truly has become a fellow witness to God's present activity." That's an amazing statement. When you say that the Bible is a fellow witness to God's present activity you mean that it is not alone, there is somebody else there witnessing as well. He goes on,

If someone today perhaps has a vision of God, of Christ, it is good to know that it has happened before. If one has a revelation from God, to know that for the early Christians, revelation also occurred in the community. If one speaks a "Thus says the Lord," and dares to address the fellowship in the first person, even going beyond the words of Scripture, that this was happening long ago. How strange and remarkable it is. If one speaks in the fellowship of the Spirit, the Word of Truth, it is neither his thoughts and reflections nor simply some exposition of Scripture, for the Spirit transcends personal observations, however interesting or profound they may be. The Spirit, as the Living God, moves through and beyond the records of past witness however valuable such records are as a model for what happens today.

Now what he is saying is that the Bible is simply a model of what is going on all the time. It is one of many witnesses. There have been witnesses in the past; there are witnesses in the present and they just stand along side the Bible. The Bible is one of many. He is alleging that the Bible is not the final source of God's revelation, but simply a witness, like a lot of other witnesses and there is plenty of additional revelation that God is giving today. He is saying that Christians not only can, but should add to the Bible, and that such additions are normal and conventional. The Bible is just a model for what the Holy Spirit continues to do today. This obviously is a frightening view: relativistic, mystical, subjective. It tells us that God continues to speak and there's all kinds of things that He has been saying and continues to say that we need to place along side the Scripture, and here we are and we don't have a record of that. That's inherent in the Charismatic movement; the belief that there is continuing, ongoing revelation, and God is continuing to speak (which of course is a denial of the singular authority of Scripture).

Edward Gross in his book, "Miracles, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare," sees the deadliness of this trend in the Church. He writes,

The age of models has come. A model takes the place of a law. Models are human perceptions of truth, they are tentative and thus subject to change as new data becomes available. These models are open and constantly tested. No scientist dares claim any longer that one model is the way to explain all known phenomena for fear that some newly discovered data will prove that scientist to be a precipitant old fool. The world of science has progressed from the old approach, Closed Systems to a new approach, Open Systems. And there are all kinds of new models. If the Bible is a Closed System of truth, with no new revelation being given through inspired Prophets or Apostles, then the model approach is an erroneous and dangerous tool in hermeneutics. There should be no confusion in this area, the orthodox teaching of Christianity has always affirmed that God's special saving revelation to mankind is restricted to the teaching of Scriptures. That is the issue. If the Bible is complete, then it represents a Closed System of truth. If it entails a fixed and absolute standard of truth, then the teaching of Scripture must be ascertained and dogmatically asserted. If God is still granting new revelation, then the truth of God is still being progressively revealed; and if this were the case, our duty would be to faithfully listen to today's Prophets as they unraveled God's truth and new and clearer representations than we find in Scripture.

Well, he says, "I don't believe that." "I don't believe that the Bible is an opened system, but a closed one." Scripture is a closed system of truth, completely sufficient and not to be added to. Revelation 22:18-19, the last chapter in the Bible says, "If you add to it, God will add to you the plagues that are written in it." And yet we have all these supposed revelations. What are they? Imagination? Fabrication? Demonization? But not divine revelation. Now in understanding this issue we need to face some questions.

Question number one, "What does inspiration mean? When we say that the Bible is inspired, what do we mean? What are we talking about?" Our word inspired comes from a Latin root that means to "breath in, to inspire." Unfortunately, that doesn't convey the true meaning of the Greek term used in Scripture. Actually the concept of "breathing in" is not found in 2 Timothy 3:16, where it says, "All Scripture is inspired by God." It's not the word for breathing in. That translation has unfortunately mislead some

folks, and they have assumed that men wrote a lot of words and God breathed into them some kind of power; some kind of divine life--that's not it. When it says, "All Scripture is inspired," the word "inspire" is theopneustos (GR.). It is actually a word that said "God-breathed." It is God breathing it out, not God breathing into it. Literally the verse says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." It is the breath of God, not the words of men into which God puffed some divine life. It is God's breath. It is God speaking.

Inspiration does not mean that the Bible has somehow been blown on by God and given some supernatural quality. It means that the words of the Bible are the words of God Himself, out of his own mouth. Every word of Scripture breathed out by God. That's why at the Burning Bush God said to Moses, "Go and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:12). And Jeremiah, the weeping prophet of Judah, received this charge from God, chapter 1, "Whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Behold I have put my words in your mouth." And God said to Ezekiel in chapter 3, "Son of man, go get thee unto the house of Israel. All My words that I shall speak unto thee, receive in thine heart and hear with thine ears and go and speak them."

And so then, we have in the Bible the words out of the mouth of God. 2 Peter 1:21, that very important text says, "No prophecy," that is, "No revelation was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The word "moved" means "carried along." They were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Theologian Thomas Thomas, recalls that as a boy he would play in the little streams that ran down the mountainside near his home.

We boys like to play what we call "boats." Our boat would be a little stick, which was placed in the water, and then we would run along beside it and follow it as it was washed downstream. When the water would run rapidly over some rocks the little stick would move rapidly as well. In other words, that little stick which served as my boyhood boat was carried along, borne along, under the complete control and direction of the water. It moved as the water moved it. So it is with reference to the writers of Scripture. They were carried along, borne along, under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit of God. They wrote as the Spirit directed them to write. They were borne along by Him so that what they wrote was exactly that which the Holy Spirit intended should be there, and what they wrote was in a very real sense, not their words; it was the very Word of God.

That's what we mean by inspiration, that the Bible is the very Word of God.

Now, a second question faces us now that we know what inspiration means. "What is the contemporary approach to Scripture? What's going on today that threatens this?" Moving outside the Charismatic movement, just a very quick lesson, but you need to understand it. Modern theologians want to allow for continued inspiration. In liberal theology or neo-orthodox theology, which is liberal in the sense that it denies the inspiration of Scripture: they want to deny. They start from the denial point. Liberal theology, as I told you this morning, and neo-orthodox theology came out of "The Enlightenment," when man began to worship his own mind, believing that he was the ultimate judge of all truth, being enamored with his intellectual capability. Man said, "I go to the Bible, I find all kinds of things that are not reasonable, rational, logical. All the supernatural and miraculous things that I can't comprehend, I

eliminate." So he starts eliminating all of that. So immediately he, of course, denies the inspiration of Scripture. It isn't the Word of God, it's the word of men; it has to be changed because there is some foolishness in here.

So, modern theology then reduces the Bible to just the best efforts of men. Well, once it is reduced to the best efforts of men then you can have continuing revelation. Right? Because men can continue to make those kinds of efforts. So modern theology wants to allow for continued inspiration. Continued, updated, Word from the Lord in some sort of mystical, personal way. It is the best of men writing about their religious experiences, and perhaps even prompted somehow by God to write down their own thoughts and ideas. At least one of these modern writers, Dewey Beagle by name, believes that some of the classic anthems of the Church are inspired in the same way as Scripture. So this is how he would understand inspiration and he is very popular. He has written, "Some of the great hymns are practically on a par with the Psalms. And one can be sure that if Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Augustus Toplaley (sp.) and Reginald Heber (sp.) had lived in the time of David and Solomon and been no more inspired than they were in their own days, some of their hymns and praise to God would have found their way into the Hebrew Bible."

In other words, the kind of inspiration they're talking about is just the kind of sort of emotional, intellectual, stimulation that makes you write down some good thoughts about God, but it is a human effort. Beagle refers in particular, for example, to George Matheson (sp.), a blind Scottish pastor who wrote, "Oh love That Will Not Let Me Go," and he says, "It's that kind of inspiration that characterizes the Bible writers." He says,

What distinguishes the Bible is its record of special revelation, not a distinctive kind of inspiration. It is just that the Bible has a unique revelation; that's what makes it distinct, but the inspiration that brought that revelation, revelation being the content, inspiration being the process, the process of inspiration which brought that content is being repeated over and over again with new content. So you have the Bible and then you have this, and it all comes through the same kind of inspiration. The same kind of inspiration that, for example, is characteristic of one who writes good music.

Beagle believes that the Canon of Scripture has never been closed. He has written that, "The revelation and inspiration of God's Spirit continues, for this reason there is no basis in considering all of the Biblical writers and editors as qualitatively different from post canonical interpreters." It's all the same. You just keep having revelation, you just keep having revelation. That's neo-orthodoxy. That's liberalism. And that is, in effect, precisely what the Charismatic movement believes. That is why, beloved, you can have neo-orthodoxy and Charismaticism coexisting in an institution, because they basically believe in an open canon. They basically believe in ongoing revelation. They may define it a little differently, but they believe that there's still inspiration and revelation coming.

That heretical view frightens any true Biblical scholar, any true believer in Scripture, because it destroys the distinctiveness of the Bible. If God is still inspiring revelation, we have got real problems. If the

Canon of Scripture is still opened, and God is still giving prophecies, and psalms, and words of wisdom, and words of knowledge, then we ought to be seeking to compile all that stuff, and we ought to be most interested in studying the more recent revelations because they're the ones that speak most directly to our times. By the way, some of the Charismatics can see the problem here. Their most popular magazine is a magazine called "Charisma." An article in Charisma recently said this,

To meditate on our personal prophecies, we should record them if at all possible. If someone approaches us saying, he or she has a word from God, we should ask the person to wait a moment until we can get an audio recorder or else ask the person to write it down. If the word comes from someone on the platform during a meeting that is not being recorded, we must try to write down as much as is possible, getting at least the main points.

"This is Scripture, we have to write it down!" My friend that's heresy. That is outright heresy that the Bible is still being written. The Canon of Scripture is not opened. God's Word, Old Testament and New Testament, is one unique miracle. It came together over a period of 1500 years. More than 40 men of God, Prophets and Apostles wrote God's word. Every jot and every tittle without error in perfect harmony, and when it was done it was done. No hymn is worthy to be compared to Scripture. No modern mystical experience can be spoken of in the same breath as Scripture.

And that leads to a third query, "Is revelation progressive?" These people who say that it is progressive, are they right? Going back to J. Rodman Williams, a Charismatic theologian, he argues for ongoing revelation,

In the Spirit, the present fellowship is as much the arena of God's vital presence as anything in the Biblical account. Indeed, in light of what we may learn from this past witness and take to heart, we may expect new things to occur in our day and in days to come. In prophecy God speaks; it is as simple, and profound, and startling as that. What happens in the fellowship is that the Word may suddenly be spoken by anyone present and so variously a "Thus says the Lord," breaks forth in the fellowship. It is usually in the first person, such as, "I am with you to bless you," or has the directness of an, "I, Thou" encounter. It comes not in a heavenly language but in the native tongue of the person speaking and with his accustomed inflections, cadences and manners. Indeed, the speech may be coarse and ungrammatical, it may be a mixture of King James and modern, it may falter as well as flow. Such really doesn't matter for, in prophecy, God uses what He finds and through frail human instruments the Spirit speaks the Word of the Lord.

Now that is as clear as you can ever hear it, that God is still giving revelation. Bad grammar, but revelation.

[He continues]

All of this, to repeat, is quite surprising and startling. Most of us, of course, were familiar with prophetic utterances recorded in the Bible, and willing to accept it as the Word of God. Isaiah's or Jeremiah's "Thus

says the Lord" we were accustomed to, but to hear a Tom or a Mary today in the 20th Century speak the same way! Many of us, also had convinced ourselves that prophecy ended with the New Testament until suddenly, through the dramatic thrust of the Holy Spirit, prophecy comes alive again. Now we wonder how we could have misread the New Testament for so long.

"Now we wonder how we could have misread the New Testament for so long." In other words he is saying, "The New Testament should have told us that prophecy would continue." In a later issue of "Logos" magazine, when he was taken to task for such foolish and heretical views, he tried to clarify his view, and this is what he said,

I do not intend, in any way, to place contemporary experience on the same level of authority as the Bible. Rather, do I vigorously affirm the decisive authority of Scripture. Hence, God does not speak just as authoritatively today as He spoke to the Biblical authors, but He does continue to speak. Thus He moves through and beyond the records of past witness, [that's the Bible], for He is the living God who still speaks and acts among His people.

Double talk! Nonsense! Pointless! What do you mean? He says, "I don't want to put this on the level of Scripture authority. God isn't speaking as authoritatively today as He spoke in the Biblical time, but He is still speaking." Well, what's the difference? This doesn't matter? This isn't authoritative? This is erroneous? That is double talk. Are some of God's words less authoritative than others, or less true, or less accurate, or less important? The view of the Charismatics is not distinguishable as I said from the neo-orthodox, who have an incessant kind of free flowing revelation. The Charismatics says it comes from a prophecy, a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, and the neo-orthodox says it's whatever you feel, it's whatever happens inside of you becomes the Word of God to you. But both of them destroy the central doctrine of "Sola Scriptura."

Once a congregation or a person sees Scripture as less than the final, complete, infallible authority for faith and life, it has thrown open the door to absolute chaos. Absolute chaos. Can you imagine being in a church, where when people stand up and say they, "Have a word from the Lord," and you're supposed to believe it every time? Anybody could claim anything, and they do. They do, and pass it off as divine truth. And corrupt Charismatic leaders, the ones that are corrupt, and the ones that are self-aggrandizing and do it for their own gain, do it all the time.

Perhaps the most brazen example of that is a widely publicized prophecy delivered by Kenneth Copeland. He claims that Jesus gave him a message during a three-day victory campaign held in Dallas, Texas. Judge for yourselves whether this could be a message from the Christ of Scripture. I am quoting Kenneth Copeland; this is what he said,

It's time for these things to happen, saith the Lord [this is his prophecy]. It's time for spiritual activity to increase. Oh yes, demonic activity will increase along at the same time, but don't let that disturb you. Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're God. Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of a fanatical way of life. Don't be disturbed when people put you down and speak harshly

and roughly of you; they spoke that way of me, should they not speak that way of you? (And again he's quoting Jesus) The more you get to be like me, the more they are going to think that way of you. They crucified me for claiming that I was God, but I didn't claim I was God. I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in me. Alleluia, that's what your doing.

You mean to tell me that Jesus gave him a revelation that said He didn't claim to be God? Copeland's prophecy is clearly false. The real Jesus, the Jesus of the New Testament did claim He was God. Using the covenant name of God He told the Jewish leaders, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am." Is Copeland genuinely a prophet, or is he one whom Peter spoke of when he wrote, "False prophets also arose among the people just as there will be false prophets among you."

Now, not all of these bizarre prophecies and visions are as clearly in conflict with Scripture. Some are merely frivolous, silly. Like the guy with the blue guitars and the Beatles. Larry Lee wrote this,

Several years ago one of my dear friends said, "Larry, when I was praying for you the other day I had a vision. I saw you with great big Mickey Mouse ears. Everything else about you looked normal except for those elephant sized ears. When I asked the Lord to tell me what the vision meant, the Spirit of the Lord spoke back to me and said, 'Larry Lee has developed his hearing; he has developed his spiritual ears.'"

Charismatics have abandoned the uniqueness of Scripture as the only Word of God and the result is a mystical trivial, silly, and foolish heretical free- for-all. Longing for something new; longing for something sensational. A longing for some emotional experience has replaced settled confidence and diligent study of God's Word, and this invites Satan's deceptive counterfeits. Melvin Hodges is a Charismatic pastor who has admitted his strong reservations about these new revelations. He's an honest fellow. Melvin Hodges is very worried about all of these even though he's a Charismatic. Let me quote what he says, just to show you that some of them are concerned.

Today some people tend to magnify the gifts of Prophecy and Revelation out of their proper proportion. Instances have occurred in which a church has allowed itself to be governed by gifts of inspiration. Deacons have been appointed and pastors removed or installed by prophecy. Chaos has resulted. The cause is obvious; prophecy was never intended to usurp the place of ministries of government or of a gift or a word of wisdom. Paul teaches us that the Body is not made up of one member but of many, and if prophecy usurps the role of wisdom or the word of knowledge, the whole Body is dominated by one ministry, that is prophecy. In other words, the whole Body becomes ruled by the prophetic member. The idea that the voice of prophecy is infallible has confused many people. Some have felt it is a sin to question what they consider to be the voice of the Spirit. However, in the ministry of all gifts there is cooperation between the divine and the human.

What's he saying? Absolutely nothing! But he understands there's a problem, but he hasn't got clue one how to deal with it. He didn't say anything. He didn't say a word about anything. He didn't give you any criteria to judge anything. All he's saying is that we got to cooperate, we can't have too many prophecies, but he has nothing to say about how do you know it's true or not true. He wants a way to resolve the

confusion, but there isn't any!

Now, not all Charismatics would agree that the problem of abuse is one of overemphasis. Some think people just aren't well trained enough. One group has started a School of the Prophets. I'm quoting from their literature,

Perhaps you feel that you have been called to be an oracle of the Lord; and have had difficulty explaining your experiences or finding someone that you could relate to and learn from. The School of the Prophets is designed to help bring grounding and clarity to the myriad of dreams and visions that are the hallmark of a prophet and seer ministry, and to assist in the restoration of the prophetic ministry within the Body of Christ. There are many that have become disillusioned and disenchanted with the prophetic ministry because of abuses and ignorant usage of the gifting. "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water." For if you have had the bitter experience of the counterfeit, know that there is a reality to discover. Abuses and misrepresentations occur simply because of the abomination of ignorance. Come and be trained at the School of the Prophets, so that you will be properly prepared to fulfill the destiny that God has chosen for you.

So their suggestion is, you just got to have good training. Take some good courses and you will be an accurate prophet. Is the distinction, by the way, between true and false a matter of technique? Is a true prophet a true prophet because he has gone to school to learn how to do it? Was there a school to train the Biblical writers? Listen, false prophecy is no Picadillo (that means a trivial thing, trifling fault). This is a major issue. In fact, if you were a prophet in the Old Testament and you missed one, you got killed. They executed you. In spite of this, some Charismatics believe anybody with any claim to have a Word from the Lord should be believed, should be heard, and don't even need a "Call" from God. "Charisma" magazine carried an ad teaching people how to listen to God's voice and talk with Him 24 hours a day. It said they could really be good at it! They were teaching how to get it and how to pass it on.

It's a lark! No accountability. And of course it points Christians away from the Scripture which is trustworthy and teaches them to seek truth through the Word. Nothing in the Charismatic movement is as destructive as a failure to adhere to Scripture alone. It opens the movement to everything; worse of all--demonic lies, seduction from spirits, pumping demon doctrine through hypocritical liars (1 Tim 4). Once you have gone beyond the Word, you are in chaos and confusion.

I want to conclude with just a brief statement about the close of the Canon of Scripture, because I think it's important. Jude 3; you might want to look at it. We'll bounce off of this for just a moment. Jude, chapter 3. It's a crucial passage on the completeness of the Bible. Jude 3, verse 3, "Beloved when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that we should earnestly contend," now listen to this, "for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Literally, the Greek text says, "The once for all delivered to the saints, faith." In the Greek text the definite article "the" preceding "faith" points to the one and only faith, there is no other. The one and only true faith. Such passages as Galatians 1:23 refer to preaching the faith. First Timothy 4:1, "Some will fall away from 'the' faith." And so it is an objective use of the expression "the

faith."

Greek scholar, Henry Alford is right when he says, "faith here is objective, it means the sum of that which Christians believe. It is not subjective faith; that is, believing in a verbal sense. It is a sum of what we believe, the Christian faith." "The Faith," he says, "is once for all delivered." "Once for all" is hapax (Greek), it refers to something done once and no more. Done once and no more. It has lasting results; it never needs repetition. The faith was once for all delivered. Delivered. The Christian faith then is complete. It is unchangeable, which is to say, that it does not need to be fixed; it does not need to be edited; it does not need additions or deletions. Every doctrine and every revelation that has arisen since is a false doctrine or a false revelation. All claims to additional revelation are false claims and must be rejected.

The word "delivered" is important as well. In the Greek it is an Aorist Passive Participle which in this context indicates an act completed in the past with no continuing element. An act completed in the past with no continuing element. Once in the past, once for all, never to be repeated, the faith was delivered. And so through the Scriptures, God has given us a body of truth that is final and complete. Our Christian faith rests on historical and objective revelation. That rules out all prophecies, all seers, all forms of new revelation until God speaks again in the end times.

Now you can see the pattern of this even in looking at Scripture. The Old Testament was written. The final books, Ezra and Nehemiah, they're not the final ones in your Bible chronologically, but they were the final ones written. There was a rearrangement of the order of the books. But after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Old Testament was completed, there was no more revelation. Four hundred years of silence. No prophet spoke God's revelation. For four hundred years, no prophet spoke. Why? God was making a point, the revelation is complete, it is done. And no prophet existed for four hundred years. And God was punctuating the completion of the Old Testament Canon with silence and sending a message to us that said, "Revelation doesn't go on all the time, it has an ending point."

The silence was finally broken and a prophet came. He was related to the Messiah and his name was John the Baptist, and God began to speak the New Testament revelation. And when the New Testament revelation was done--revelation was done. The last book was Revelation, penned by John in 96 AD, and it was over. By the Second Century, the complete Canon (the word canon means standard, rule, faith and practice), the complete New Testament exactly as we have it today was popularly recognized. Church councils in the fourth century made it official, the Canon was complete. And from then on God has been silent as to revelation. Just as the close of the Old Testament was followed by silence, the close of the New Testament has been followed by the utter absence of new revelation in any form. Since the Book of Revelation was written there has been no new written or verbal revelation from God. Scripture is the test of everything, it is the Christian's only standard.

Spurious books have been offered. The Roman Catholic Church includes the Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic Church accepts it as Scripture but it is not. If you study it you will find, as I did when I studied it in seminary, there are errors of history, errors of geography, and gross errors in theology. Jerome, who

lived from 345AD to 419AD was a spokesman for excluding the Apocrypha books. Some of the early Church fathers, most notably, Augustine, did accept them, though not necessarily on a par with the Hebrew Old Testament. Finally, in the 16th Century the Reformers affirmed "Sola Scriptura," the truth the Bible alone is authoritative, denied the Apocrypha any place among the inspired writings. It never had had any and it shouldn't of have. The Roman Church reacted against the Reformers in the Council of Trent from 1545 to 1563, stating that all of the Apocrypha was canonical. And Protestants and Catholics have maintained the disparity to this day. If you have a Catholic Bible you'll find the Apocrypha is in the middle. Those are spurious, uninspired books.

How did Christians know the inspired books from the ones that weren't inspired? There were three tests. One was Apostolic Authorship. It was written by an Apostle or a close associated of an Apostle. For example, Mark was not an Apostle but the companion of Peter who was. Luke was not an Apostle but worked closely with Paul who was. A second test by the early Church was content. Was the content consistent with Apostolic Doctrine? Was it absolutely accurate doctrinally? This was very important because the heretics were writing the false books, but in all of the false books there was false teaching because why would a heretic write a book about truth? He'd want to get a heresy in. Heretics tried to worm their way into the Church. Their doctrinal errors were easily spotted because they contradicted the Apostle's teachings. A third test was the response of the Churches: if God's people accepted it, used it for worship, made it a part of their lives. If Christians were universally being taught and blessed by the Book that was another stamp of approval.

By 404 AD, the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible was complete. It was the earliest known translation of all 66 books of the Bible, and they were the very same 66 in 404 AD that we have in our Bible today. God spoke once for all, delivered it and preserved it through the ages and you have it exactly the way he delivered it. True churches always believed the Bible is complete. The Charismatic movement doesn't believe that. Now, they want to deny that they are adding to Scripture, but their views on prophetic utterance, prophetic gifts, knowledge, wisdom, visions, dreams, revelations, add to Scripture. Unwittingly, they undermine the uniqueness and the authority of the Word of God. You see, Christians can't play fast and loose with inspiration and revelation, or they will never be able to distinguish the voice of God, from the voice of man, from the voice of Satan.

The Holy Spirit is working mightily, I believe, in the Church today, but not in the way that most Charismatics think. The Holy Spirit's role is to empower the Church to preach the Word; to empower the Church to teach the Word; to empower the Church to write about the Word, that it might be understood. The Holy Spirit is empowering the Church to worship according to truth, to witness to the truth and proclaim it, to grow by the study of the Word, and to serve as the Word calls and commands. He does lead us into God's truth and He directs us into God's will for our lives through the Word, not through new revelation. "God told me," is a dangerous and heretical model for anyone to take, because it opens to chaos, confusion, mysticism, subjectivism, demons and deception.

"All Scripture, given by inspiration of God is profitable." It is completely profitable. It is so profitable that the man of God is made perfect by it thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Right? And the Scripture is sufficient; we need nothing more than this. And once you introduce any more than this the

chaos is irretrievable. That's the tragedy of the Charismatic movement and that is why it is in chaos. That is why there are some people in the movement who are tearing their hair out because they can't control what's going on. But once you allow for additional revelation its gone, there's no control. This Word is all that God wanted us to have "Once for all delivered."

Let's bow in prayer. Father, we thank you for the affirmation again tonight as we think through these things. That your Word is sufficient. That we have a faith once for all delivered to the saints. It had a beginning and an end. You spoke and then you were silent, and now you work to implement and apply and proclaim this already revealed truth. We pray for people caught in the confusion of new revelations, the chaos. Who thus are turned away from the single authority of Scripture and the responsibility to diligently study it and find themselves running after and pursuing mystical experiences that mean nothing. That is nothing holy and righteous but things confusing and even demonic. Deliver folks from that Father. Take them into the green pastures of your Word where their souls are fed with all the nourishment they could ever need. We thank you for this treasure. Nothing is to be compared with it. We acknowledge the great gift that it is, and desire to live by it. In Christ's name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 3, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Scriptures quoted in this message are from the New American Standard Bible.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 3**

# ***Does God Still Give Prophecies?***

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In our study of this most fascinating and important subject of the Charismatic movement in our contemporary time, we come tonight to message number three in our series; and we are going to be building on the prior message dealing with "Does God still give Revelation?" as we talk about "Are there still Prophecies from God?", another very important component of understanding and assessing the Charismatic movement.

Certainly, in my mind, the most disturbing aspect of the Charismatic movement and their thirst for supernatural experience and supernatural encounter is their claim that God is still revealing Himself verbally to them. As we saw in our last study, they claim that God is speaking to them: that is a constant claim. In fact, there probably is nothing more commonly expressed among Charismatics than that, "The Lord told me!" Or, "Jesus told me!" They believe that the Lord is still telling them specific things in specific terms. God is still breathing out revelation.

It has been a curiosity to me and should be to us, I think, that if God is still giving revelation, the only

ones that He gives it to are Charismatics! Nobody else seems to be getting revelation with the exception of the founders of various cults. But apart from the cults and the Charismatics I don't see people within the framework, the broad framework of Christianity, claiming revelation.

Now, I want to be very clear that when I talk about the fact that God is no longer giving revelation, I don't want to be misunderstood. I do believe that the Holy Spirit does lead Christians. Romans 8:14 says that, "As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the children of God." I believe the Holy Spirit guides us. I believe He empowers us to witness, to speak, to write, to act with Spiritual Power and impact. I believe the Holy Spirit impresses His will on our minds leading us to praise, leading us to obedience, leading us to righteousness, leading us to spiritual service. We as believers can be confident of his moving on our minds to lead us to truth. However, He does not speak to us in audible words. He does not place inaudible, but specific words in our minds. He is not breathing out any more revelation.

We noted the importance of understanding that in our last study, and if you weren't here you'll want to get the tape. You remember that Jude said that, "Scripture was once for all delivered to the Saints." And when it was "delivered" it was done. He was not only speaking of past Scripture when he wrote that, he was speaking of present Scripture which he himself was even writing, and he was speaking of future Scripture yet to be written by Apostles and their associates to complete the New Testament. He identifies the composite of God's revelation and says, "It was once for all delivered to the Saints," in God's plan.

And after all the Scripture was complete and "once for all delivered to the Saints" the Early Church said, "The Canon is closed." Now that word "canon" needs definition. We mentioned last time that it comes from a word "kanon" (Greek) which is a reed. That reed was used as a measuring stick, and so the word "kanon" in the Greek came to mean a rod, or a bar, or a measuring rule, or standard, or limit. We would call it a measuring rod, or a measuring stick, a ruler, a yardstick; something by which other things are measured. In the more spiritual sense it became a standard by which you measure truth. The Scripture metaphorically then became the standard of all truth; the standard of all spiritual ideas, concepts, and theology. And so the Canon of Scripture, that is Scripture completed, and the rule was "once for all delivered to the Saints."

Just to give you a little deeper insight into that, the Old Testament Canon was closed about 425 B.C., 425 years before Christ. The last prophecy was written by Malachi, [and] placed into the Canon. There was no question which books were inspired by God. No question. It was clear to the people of God what they were. In fact, under the leadership of the scribe Ezra, there was some work to pull all of that together, and the consensus of the people of God was very clear on what the 39 inspired books were. How did they know?

Two simple ways. One, the writer, well known to be a spokesman for God, claimed to be speaking and writing the inspired Word of God. First principle, the writer, well known as a spokesman for God claimed to be speaking and writing the inspired Word of God. Second principle, there were no errors of history, geography, or theology at all in the book. And if the writer was familiar to them, claimed the inspiration of God, and wrote without error, they knew they had inspired revelation.

Now there were many attempts made by Satan to infiltrate the Old Testament Canon with uninspired books. At least 14 of them have been accumulated and together they are called the Apocrypha. You find them in a Roman Catholic Bible. They are not a part of our Bible. They are not inspired books. They are books: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the rest of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (not to be confused with Ecclesiastes), Baruch, the Song of the Three Holy Children, the History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasses, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. All spurious. We call them Pseudepigrapha--false writing. They were clearly fakes. How do we know they were fakes? They were written long after the canon was completed and they lacked the prophetic quality and authorship to stamp them as inspired Scripture. None of their writers claimed divine inspiration and some openly disclaimed it. And Apocrypha books contained errors of facts, errors of ethics, errors of doctrine. For example, some of the Apocrypha books advocate suicide. Some of them advocate assassination and some of them teach praying for dead people. Therein lies one of the reasons you find them in a Catholic Bible. The Old Testament Canon was unquestioned; it is still unquestioned because it is so evident what was inspired.

The New Testament writers then came together to write the remaining 27 books of Scripture. And they had similar tests to determine a book's canonicity. One, was the book authored by an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle? They knew who the Apostles were and they knew who their close associates were. The key question about the book's inspiration was tied to Apostolic authorship or one closely associated. For example, the Gospel of Mark was written by Mark, and Mark was not an Apostle but a close associate of Peter, who was. The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written by Luke who was not an Apostle but a very close associate of Paul, who was. The Apostles were known to the people, their associates were known to the people, and when Apostles wrote and claimed inspiration the people were secure in the veracity of their writings.

Another test applied by the Early Church was the test of content. Did the writings square with what the Apostles taught? In those early years of the Church, heretics such as the Gnostics tried to slip in phony books, but none of them ever made it. If it didn't square with Apostolic doctrine--it didn't pass. And the doctrinal aberrations were very easy to spot.

A third test was this, "Is the book regularly read and used in the churches?" In other words, did the people of God readily accept it? Read it during worship and make its teachings a part of their daily living?

A final test was determined that would sort of pull it all together, and that was the book recognized and used by succeeding generations after the Early Church?

All of those tests applied leave us with the 27 books that we have in our New Testament. They all were written by authors who were either Apostles or closely associated with Apostles. Their content is in complete and total agreement and harmony with all the teaching of the Apostles, and with all other books of the New Testament and Old Testament. All 27 of them were read in the churches and used by the Church and by succeeding generations even until now. There was also a formidable group of fakes that came in the New Testament period, books like the, "Epistle of Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Shepherd of Hermas." And then there were false books called, "the Gospel of Andrew, the Gospel of Bartholomew, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip." They all failed to

make it in because they couldn't pass the test of authenticity.

The false books then of the Old Testament and New Testament, what we call, as I said, Pseudepigrapha, were attempts to pollute the Biblical text with spurious revelation. Now, listen to me. That attempt didn't end in those days; it is still going on and before we are done tonight we are going to see that in clear terms. People and groups have continued to claim their works and their writings are inspired by God, and are true, and authoritative and binding. And whenever they do that, it leads to aberrant doctrine. Revelation 22:18 warns about this, it says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book."

Now, someone will scoff and say, "Well, that's only a warning that applies to the Book of Revelation and not the entire Bible." Before you congratulate yourself, by the way, too loudly on such reasoning, realize this, Revelation is the last book ever written, all the way as late as 96 A.D. It is the last book penned; it is therefore the last book in the Bible. Therefore, if you add anything to the Book of Revelation, you are adding it to the Bible and you put yourself in danger of the curse of Revelation 22:18.

Now, someone will immediately say, "Now, wait a minute. If that's true then why don't these people who add to the Bible go up in smoke? Go up in flames or have some personal holocaust that takes their life." Well, one thing is clear, God does keep His word. He doesn't keep it by your timetable or mine but by His own; and He may be withholding the force of that curse until "Judgment Day." Christ has put His stamp of authority on the Scripture. The Church has clearly discovered the Canon of God's Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and has abandoned every spurious attempt to pollute it with false writing. To add anything to Scripture or to downplay the singular, unique, inspiration of Scripture, then is to not only go against the Word of God and the warning of Scripture and the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, but it is to bring yourself into the very dangerous place where you are susceptible to the curse of God. And, of course, what happens when you introduce something as true is [that] you open up a spiritual free-for-all, unintentionally perhaps.

The Charismatic movement today has initiated that free-for-all as serious as any error in that movement is the error of claiming revelation from God. It is reckless; it is indiscriminate. Now, within that revelation claim, there is a specific category that I want to deal with tonight and that's the matter of prophecies.

Yesterday, I was watching television, and I have been watching Channel 40 frequently lately, in order to glean some illustrations of this. And a preacher from Texas, by the name of Larry Lee came on and told about a prophecy that he had had, that he [then] gave to a certain individual. Verbatim, God gave it to him; verbatim he gave it to this certain individual. This is common. This was not any big prophecy with far reaching implications or application; this was a personal prophecy for one guy, and he repeated that prophecy from God that was given to that man as expressing the very will of God, in the very words of God. This is routine for them.

There has arisen recently a very interesting group that is sort of leading the prophetic parade, if we can call it that, and they come from Kansas City. They have gathered the name, "The Kansas City Prophets." They are the subject of much writing today. They are self-proclaimed prophets in Kansas City and they

serve as a good example of how far prophetic abuses can go. They are very popular. I was shocked, absolutely shocked, to find out within the last week, that one of their leaders is speaking in Westminster Church, the Church of G. Campbell Morgan and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in the city of London. That is the level to which they have ascended, these Kansas City Prophets.

Invited to speak as guests in a Kansas City church, these self-styled prophets each prophesied that, "The Lord had told them that the Church was to disband. That the Church's leaders had no right to challenge the prophecy and that if the Church failed to heed the prophecy, 'Ichabod, the Glory Has Departed,' would be written above the door." Now, imagine a man coming into the pulpit of this Church, telling you he had a "Word from the Lord" that you're to disband, and if you don't disband according to the "Word from the Lord," Ichabod would be written over your Church.

The Prophets had allegedly received a message from God saying that all the Christians in Kansas City were to be under the authority of the Prophets' home church. So that all the Christians of Kansas City were to leave their churches and go to the Church known as the Kansas City Fellowship. Similar prophecies were delivered in and around Kansas City and other churches and incredibly, one church at least, actually responded by dropping its ties with the Assemblies of God and aligning with the Kansas City Fellowship. Now that's a novel approach to "Church Growth!" But it has more in common with the methodology of cults than it does with the work of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, the Kansas City Prophets admit that they have prophesied falsely on occasion--they admit it. They specialize, they say, in predictive prophecy. They foretold, for example, that a nationwide revival would sweep across England in June of 1990, one year ago. Hundreds of thousands were going to turn to Christ and the movement would then spread to the entire European Continent. Like many of their predictions, the revival never materialized. One of their prophets concocted a novel explanation of why so many of their prophecies go unfulfilled, and I am quoting, here's what he said:

I figure, if I hit two-thirds of it, I'm doing pretty good. God told me that, "If I release the 100% Rema (sp.) right now, the accountability would be awesome, and you'd have so much 'Ananias and Sapphira' going on that the people wouldn't grow, they'd be too scared." But He said, "If it was 'on target' it would kill instead of scaring the people to repentance."

Now, I don't even know what that means. But apparently what he meant was, God told him I have to be wrong once and a while or people would be too frightened of what I say. Kansas City Fellowship Pastor, Mike Bickel (sp.) adds, "Now, the 'two-thirds,' you know when Bob first said it, I said, 'two-thirds?'" He said, "Well, that's better than its ever been up to now, you know. That's the highest level it's ever been." In other words, these so-called prophets claim they have a "Word from the Lord" but the odds are one in three at best that it will be false! No wonder their prophecies have thrown so many churches into hopeless confusion. And what a blasphemy against the God who is supposed to be the author of these.

Oddly enough, despite their poor track record, the Kansas City Prophets have garnered an international following. They have aligned with John Wimbers' (sp.) Vineyard Christian Fellowship, and they now speak worldwide about the modern day prophetic ministry. In a forward to a book endorsing the Kansas

City Prophets, written by Dr. John White, he writes:

Battles about prophets have plagued the Church from time to time. Early last century it was the Irvingite Controversy in London with the leading prophet having to confess after years that he had been deceived. Many of us have found that hearing from God is no easy thing. In fact, the Church has had so many bad experiences with prophets that we now react too rapidly and fearfully. We could be in danger of discarding a live baby in our horror over dirty bath water.

My question is, "Who says there's a baby in the dirty bath water?" White, for example, fiercely defends the Kansas City Prophets, although he acknowledges that they have, "made mistakes." He seems to believe that criticism of them is inherently Satanic. Quoting White he says:

Satan fears those words that come fresh from God's lips. Because Satan so dreads the fresh word, he will arouse controversy wherever it comes forth miraculously through the lips of a real prophet, or from the lips of an Evangelist, aflame with the Spirit.

Now, do you see what a trap that is? Because if you hear a prophecy and you reject it--Ah! Ha! That's satanic! So you're trapped. Curiously, White believes that controversy about the Kansas City Prophets is strong evidence of their genuineness. In a section titled (mistitled really), "Beware of False Prophets," White quotes Jesus' warning about false prophets in Matthew 7:15, Matthew 24:11, and Mark 13:22. Then White writes this, listen to this:

We are warned that it is to happen. Most scholars feel the words of Jesus apply particularly to the last days. They may be approaching us now. How are we to discern the false from the true? For one thing, true prophets will be unpopular.

Listen to me, let me say this as plainly as I possibly can, that is the worst imaginable starting point for a discussion of how to discern false prophets! Whether they're unpopular or not doesn't mean anything. Jim Jones was unpopular, except with a few deceived souls. Certainly, those who speak truth are often unpopular, but notoriety and unpopularity is not a test of authenticity. Saddam Hussein is unpopular! And Jesus and John the Baptist went through periods of their ministry when they were enormously popular. That doesn't prove anything. The only test of a true prophet is the accuracy of his prophecies.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 says, "How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously." Simple, Deuteronomy 18:21-22, "If it isn't true it isn't from God!" And what was the penalty under the Law for such a prophecy? Verse 20 adds, "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have commanded him to speak. . .that prophet shall die." There weren't in those days a lot of false prophets running around loose. Astonishingly, in a five page discussion, of how to discern false prophets, White never once, in five pages, never once speaks of accuracy or truthfulness as a test of their integrity. In fact, he explicitly states that he believes that those are not valid tests of a prophet's credentials!

He believes that lying prophecies do not necessarily disqualify a person from speaking for God. He concludes his section on discerning false prophets with this statement, "Prophets are, of course, human beings. As such, they can make mistakes and lie. They need not cease to be prophets for their mistakes and failings." That statement not only betrays an appalling ignorance of Scripture, but it betrays a very strong desire to legitimize prophecy at any cost. Biblically a prophet spoke the mind of God. Every prophetic message contained a "Thus saith the Lord," if not explicitly, implicitly. A prophecy in the Biblical sense is not the prophets opinion, it's not the prophets speculation, it is the Word of God and it could never be wrong--never! It is not a mere impression on the prophet's mind. It is not a guess. It is not a divination. It has nothing whatever to do with sooth saying; it is a Word from the Lord. And the Lord never made a mistake. And since the prophet speaks a Word from the Lord, he was held to the highest level of accountability and judged with the utmost severity if he prophesied falsely.

It stands to reason that since a prophet is a mouthpiece for God's own words, every authentic prophecy would be true, reliable, and inerrant. Otherwise, God's a liar, for we must downgrade the meaning of prophecy and embrace some secondary level of inspiration where you sort of give your opinion. We would have to devise some kind of theory in which God somehow enables contemporary prophets to deliver a message that maybe true or maybe false; it's sort of "up for grabs." Beloved, the ecclesiastical landscape is literally filled with Charismatics who are saying, "God talked to them and God gave them prophecies," and they are pushing those prophecies at the Church. That is serious, that is disastrous, and the results of it are all around us.

Last Sunday, in connection with talking about discernment, I quoted from Bill Haman (sp.), who wrote an article in the magazine called Charisma, which is one of the chief magazines of the movement. And in that article he shared his belief about prophecies and I need to repeat that because you need to hear it in this context. Haman believes:

"All personal prophecies are conditional, whether or not any conditions are made explicit." That is, he says, "Prophecies can be canceled, altered, revised, reversed, or diminished. For prophecy of this kind to come to pass requires the proper participation and cooperation of the one who receives the prophetic word."

So in Haman's scheme, the fact that prophecy goes unfulfilled is no proof it was false to begin with! If circumstances change or if the prophet himself lacks faith, God may change the prophecy in any way or even cancel it. So everything is "up for grabs." First, he may be right, he may be wrong. If he's right, and he doesn't follow through with the right amount of faith, or circumstances change, even though it once was right, it now is wrong. It should come to pass, it might not come to pass, if it does come to pass it's ok, if it doesn't come to pass it's ok. Just, endless, useless double talk! Obviously, Haman would deny that he puts modern prophecy on the same level as Scripture, but in practice it is absolutely impossible to discern any distinction.

Now how do you determine if a prophecy is true? Here's what Haman says, listen to this:

I have sometimes heard people say, "I didn't witness with that prophecy," but after questioning them, I discovered that what they really meant was that the prophecy didn't fit their theology, personal desires, or goals, or their emotions reacted negatively to it. They failed to understand that we don't bear witness with the soul, the mind, the emotions, or will. Our reasoning is in the mind, not the spirit. So our traditions, beliefs and strong opinions are not true witnesses to prophetic truth. The spirit reaction originates deep within our being. Many Christians describe the physical location of its corresponding sensation as the upper abdominal area.

What is he saying? He is saying, "Ignore your beliefs. Ignore your theology. Ignore your reason. Ignore your logic. Ignore your common sense, and wait for a feeling in your upper abdominal area, so you will know whether a prophecy is true!" Foolish! Nonsense! That kind of thinking, however, permeates the Charismatic movement. In the end, many prophecies are judged on nothing more than some kind of feeling in the gut. That is precisely why error and confusion run rampant in the Charismatic movement. You cannot have an approach to theological data like that without having Satan move in and confuse everybody. The fact remains throughout the history of the Church, no genuine revival, no orthodox movement has ever been led by people whose primary authority was based on private revelations from God. None in the history of the Church. Many groups have claimed to receive new revelation, but all of them have been fanatical, heretical, cultic, and fraudulent. Both Charismatics and Non-Charismatics need to consider whether there is a parallel between these groups and the modern Charismatic movement. It moves more, and more, and more into heresy and aberration, because it is not controlled by the Word of God.

Several major heresies will illustrate this for you, and I will give you a little history flow here. Let's take an old one from the second century, Montanism. Montanism. Montanus was a second century heretic from Phrygia, who believed he was a prophet sent by God to reform Christianity with new revelation. He believed he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in all his teaching and he wrote the very Word of God, and spoke the very Word of God. Two "so called" prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, were instrumental in the spread of Montanism. And I warn you at this point, that in most cults there has been a dominating influence by a woman, which, of course, steps outside the provision of Scripture, indicating clearly to us that women are not to teach in the Church, but are to learn in submission. And so, there is a reversal of that kind of role, usually in cultic activity. It was true in Montanism back in the second century.

Of these women, Eusebius, one of the early fathers wrote, "Montanus also stirred up two women and filled them with the bastard spirit, so that they uttered demented, absurd, and irresponsible sayings." Some historians have taken that to mean that these women spoke in tongues. Hippolytus, another early writer, wrote about the Montanists and said this, and, of course, these have been translated into English. He said of the Montanist:

They have been deceived by two females, Priscilla and Maximilla, by name, whom they hold to be prophetesses, asserting that into them the Paraclete Spirit entered. They magnify these females above the Apostles and every gift of grace, so that some of them go so far as to say that "In them there is something more than Christ." They introduce novelties in the form of fasts and feasts, abstinences, and diets of radishes, giving these females as their authority.

Montanism spread rapidly throughout the early church and reached Rome by the second half of the second century. Eusebius described its birth and early growth with these words:

Montanus, they say, first exposed himself to the assaults of the adversary through his unbounded lust for leadership. He was one of the recent converts and he became possessed of a spirit and suddenly began to rave in a kind of a ecstatic trance and to babble jargon, prophesying in a manner contrary to the custom of the Church, which had been handed down by tradition from the earliest times. Some of them had heard his bastard utterances; rebuked him as one possessed of a devil, remembering the Lord's warning to guard vigilantly against the coming of false prophets. But others were carried away and not a little elated, thinking themselves possessed of the Holy Spirit and of the gift of prophecy.

There you are in the second century. Satan already attempting to counterfeit and confuse in the Church with supposed new revelation. Tertullian, one of the leading Church Fathers converted to Montanism in the later years of his life and wrote this description of a Montanist church service. Here is his description:

We have among us now a sister who has been granted gifts of revelations, which she experiences in church during the Sunday services through ecstatic vision in the spirit. And after the people have been dismissed at the end of the service, it is her custom to relate to us what she has seen. "Among other things," says she, "There was shown to me a soul in bodily form and it appeared like a spirit, but it was no more something void of qualities, but rather a thing which could be grasped. Soft and translucent and of ethereal color in a form at all points human."

And I ask, "Does that sound familiar?" Tertullian sounds like he might have been describing a 20th century Charismatic church, and somebody having a vision of something. Montanus and his followers claimed to receive revelation from God and they claimed that it supplemented the Bible. They believed the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla. Montanus believed he was living in the last days immediately before the Return of Christ. He taught that the Kingdom would be set up in his own village, and that the Kingdom would be in Pepuza, and he would have a prominent role in it. Those and other false prophecies were among the chief reasons the rest of the Church considered his movement heretical. He opposed formalism in the Church. He wanted everything to be free flowing, no structure, no form, let it all happen. And he boldly intimidated Christians by claiming his followers were more spiritual than those who had only the dead letter of the Scripture. Sound familiar?

In most respects you might say Montanus held to an orthodox theology, Trinity, Deity of Christ, etc., but the movement was schismatic. They believed themselves to be the True Church. The rest of the Church branded Montanism as a serious heresy to be rejected. Augustine wrote against the movement and at the Council of Constantinople the movement was decreed the equivalent of outright paganism.

It's sad to say, but much of the contemporary Charismatic movement could be branded Neo-Montanism. One Charismatic leader, Larry Christianson, who has written a very popular book on tongues, [which has been] around for many years, claims, believe it or not, "The Montanist movement as part of the Charismatic historical tradition." So even they want to be identified with Montanus.

Let's move in history to another movement--Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholicism. You might not understand the close parallel between the Charismatic movement and the Catholic movement. You might be curious about why there are so many Charismatic Catholics; that would tell you a little bit about the affinity that they have for each other. The similarity between the Charismatic view of revelation and the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is worth a look.

A good place to start is with the Roman Catholic concept of tradition. Roman Catholic scholar, Gabriel Moran, will help us with that. He gives three classifications of revelation or tradition. Dogmatic Tradition--that is the revealed truth made known by God in Scripture before the death of the last Apostle. That would be Scripture. Dogmatic Tradition is often called by Catholics--Primary Revelation.

Secondly, he says there is Disciplinary Tradition. Disciplinary Tradition. What does he mean by that? He says, well there is a tradition including the practices and liturgical rites of the Church, in Apostolic or Post-Apostolic times that are not a part of divine revelation in Scripture. Disciplinary Tradition is commonly called Secondary Tradition. Tradition then, said the French Roman Catholic, George Tafard (sp.), "Was the overflow of the Word outside sacred Scripture. It was neither separate from nor identical with Holy Writ. Its contents were the other Scriptures through which the Word made Himself known."

You ask yourself the question, "Why do they believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary? Why do they believe in the Immaculate Conception? Where do they find that? Where do they get Purgatory? Where do they get lighting candles for the dead? Where do they get that? It does not come out of Scripture," you say. Yes. But it comes out of their Secondary Tradition, which is the equivalent of Scripture in terms of its authority. It was decided by the Pope or the Church or the Council.

Another Roman Catholic with a view similar to what Charismatics are saying today is Caspar Schatsquire (sp.), who died in 1527. He taught, "That an intimate revelation from the Holy Spirit is an everyday possibility. Once known beyond doubt," he said, "It is as binding as the teaching that came from Christ's own mouth." And there is the third level of revelation. Dogmatic Tradition and Scripture, Disciplinary Tradition in the ceremonies and the development of Catholic tradition, and then there is that Personal Revelation that comes through some revelation from the Holy Spirit that comes to an individual.

Now all of that raises the question, "Where does the Bible end?" Because of their interpretation of the word "tradition," Roman Catholic Doctrinal teaching is utterly opened ended. Church councils and Popes can still bring in new doctrines, and individuals can have new revelations from the Holy Spirit. So there is always the possibility of adding something that is equal in authority to the Scripture. The Council of Trent, meeting from 1545 to 1563, was convened to solidify Catholic opposition to the Protestant Reformation. And here is what that Council said:

"The Holy, Ecumenical and General Synod of Trent, having this aim always before its eyes, that errors may be removed and the purity of the gospel be preserved in the Church, which was before promised through the Prophets in the Holy Scripture, and which Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first published by His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached through His Apostles to every creature

as a source of all saving truth and of discipline of conduct. And perceiving that this truth and this discipline are contained in written books and in unwritten traditions, which were received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ Himself, or by the same Apostles at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and were handed on and have come down to us following the example of the orthodox fathers, this Synod receives and venerates," listen to this, "with equal pious affection and reverence, all the books, both of the New and Old Testaments together with the said traditions as having been given from either the lips of Christ or by the dictation of the Holy Spirit and preserved in unbroken succession in the Catholic Church."

They have all kinds of revelation. According to that, God has been giving revelation through the Roman Catholic Church since the New Testament era on. From the unwritten traditions handed down, it's a short step to the concept of the infallibility of the Pope, who is the successor (supposedly) to Peter. And the Roman Catholic theology teaches that when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra" (that means out of the seat of authority) he does it with supreme apostolic authority--nothing lacking whatsoever.

Since the Roman Catholic Church then, allows for additional revelation they're very comfortable in the Charismatic realm, in terms of this particular issue. They too, like the Charismatics, go beyond the Scriptures. Their doctrines of Penance, Purgatory, Papal Infallibility, Prayers for the Dead, the whole Sacramental System, doesn't come out of the Bible at all--at all.

My concern is, the Charismatic movement is building a tradition. An unbiblical, extrabiblical, tradition that stands alongside Scripture as equal. They are doing exactly what historic Catholicism did. When you ask, for example, a Charismatic person, "How important is it to be 'Slain in the Spirit?'" There are some who would say it's absolutely essential to be "Slain in the Spirit." When you ask one of them, "Where in the Bible is slaying in the spirit discussed?" You probably will get an answer that's something like this, "I'm not sure but its got to be there somewhere!" Press the issue, "Find it for me! It isn't there." "That doesn't matter, Jesus told them to do it!" That's the tradition.

Moving into another category, let's talk about Neo-Orthodoxy. Moving away from Montanism and Catholicism and looking at liberal theology in the form of Neo-Orthodoxy. It's a term, it's a title for a theology that denies the inerrancy of Scripture, the inspiration of Scripture. Neo-Orthodox theology says the Scripture not the objective Word of God, but it's the subjective Word of God. In other words, it would go something like this, "The Bible, as the words sit on the page, was not written by God. But when you read these words written by man God can make them alive to you and they become inspired to you." That's Neo-Orthodoxy. It is not the Word of God, but it becomes the Word of God in you as God kind of warms it up and makes it apply to you. Sitting on the shelf it is not the objective Word of God, but some of its truths will pop out at you and they become to you the Word of God.

J. K. S. Reed puts it this way, "God marches up and down through the Bible Magisterially, making His Word come to life at any point throughout its length and breadth. So too it is rightly said that the Bible becomes the Word of God. The Bible becomes the Word of God by stated and steady appointment." In other words, God just zaps you with it and it becomes the Word of God, because of its effect on you.

Emile Brunner (sp.) says, "The Spirit of God is imprisoned within the covers of the written word, and He

is released in your experience." Mystical! So Neo-Orthodoxy says, "The Bible is not all there is. God is still giving revelation." C. H. Dodd, one of the most popular Neo-Orthodox writers says, "If the Bible is indeed the Word of God, it is so, not as the last word." Not as the last word. God has more to say. If it is the Word of God--its not the last word. So the inspiration of the Bible depends on subjective experience.

Now, what do you get then out of this? If you follow the path, God is still talking, God is still speaking, and prophecies are still coming from the Lord, you are following the tradition not of historic Christianity, not of Reformation theology, you are following a tradition of Montanism, Catholicism, and Neo-Orthodoxy. You're falling into the traps that have led to those kinds of errors. This is not in line with historic theology.

And one last illustration--the Cults. The Book of Mormon says this, (this is right out of the Book of Mormon):

Do you not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold! I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do you suppose that I know of their surety? Behold! I say unto you, they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. And this is the Spirit of Revelation which is in me.

The Book of Mormon says this is the Holy Spirit's revelation. The Mormons put two other books, written by Joseph Smith, on a par with Scripture, "The Doctrine and Covenants" and the "Pearl of Great Price." From these "Further Revelations" pour error, after error, after error concerning God, Christ, the nature of man, theological chaos, [and] damning heresies. By the way, did you know what the seventh Article of Faith is in the Mormon religion? Here's the seventh Article of Faith, listen to it, "We believe in the gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelations, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues." They are very comfortable in that arena, because they believe in ecstatic experiences and extended revelation.

Christian Science, which I always think is a ridiculous name because it isn't Christian and it isn't scientific. It's like Grape Nuts; they're not grapes or nuts. Christian Science is another cult. A cult that bases its teaching on truths supposedly given by God in addition to Scripture. The Christian Science Journal, July 1975, states, "Because it is not a human philosophy, but a divine revelation, the divinity based reason and logic of Christian Science necessarily separates it from all other systems." It is divine revelation. That same issue of the Christian Science Journal calls Mary Baker Eddy "The Revelator of Truth for this Age." Another woman, by the way. Mrs. Eddy wrote:

I should blush to write of "Science and Health with Keys to the Scriptures," as I have, were it of human origin and were I, apart from God, its author. But as I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of Heaven in divine metaphysics, I cannot be super modest in my estimate of the Christian Science Textbook.

She says, I can boast about it because God wrote it. God is its author. And although the errors of Christian Science regarding God, Christ, and the Scriptures are well documented in many books, Mrs. Eddy was convinced that she was used by God to reveal His truth for her day. The truth was that she was simply a dupe of Satan!

Perhaps the most visible cultists in our nation are called Jehovah's Witnesses. Tireless in their efforts, they go from door to door spreading their doctrine of salvation by works, negating the grace of God through Christ--a damnable heresy. They claim Jesus was a created being, not God the Son. And how did they come up with that? They got it from God! In "Watchtower Magazine," it says, "The Watchtower is a magazine without equal on earth. This is not giving any credit to the magazine publishers, but is due to the great Author (capital A) of the Bible with its truths and prophecies who now interprets its prophecies." Boy, God is sure giving a lot of conflicting theology out.

And then there is the "Worldwide Church of God" founded by Herbert W. Armstrong, "Plain Truth" magazine, "The World Tomorrow" television program. And where did they get their start? Mrs. Armstrong had a vision, and the angel laid out the whole system for Mrs. Armstrong. She told her husband and a new cult was born. And then there is Sun Myung Moon, self-styled Messiah from Korea, [who] says he is the divine messenger from God, and God gave him ultimate truth. "Not from Scripture, not from literature, not from man's brain," he says.

Virtually every cult, every false teaching ever spawned is built on the premise that its leader or leaders have access to new revelation. And it even goes into the New Age stuff all the way from Edgar Casey to L. Ron Hubbard (sp.) and Scientology, who claim direct revelation of some kind from God. You see, Charismatic acceptance of modern prophecies represents a turn down a perilous road away from historic Christianity. The marker may read "Something More," but the road of new revelation is a path of something less.

Some Charismatics, by the way, are troubled with the problem. Stephen Strang (sp.) writing in "Charisma" magazine says:

When it comes to something such as personal prophecy, we believe that extremism is more deadly than when dealing with less volatile issues. That is because there is an element of control involved when one individual is able to speak for God to a group of individuals. It isn't always easy to tell when a person is really speaking for God or speaking carnally, or maybe even speaking for the enemy.

What an amazing mess that is. You don't even know who they are speaking for. We believe there are some who purport to prophesy that actually get their unusual ability to know the future, not from the Holy Spirit, but from the Spirit of Divination. That's false by the way, because no spirit, no demon spirit knows the future, they only know the past. And there are some Charismatics who are so eager to know God's will, or to get a word from God to be singled out in service where the special gift may be manifest, that they are susceptible to spirits that are not from God. In other words, they want to "show off" so they are vulnerable. Strang (sp.) has identified the central problem, but he offers no solution, How do we know if a true prophet is speaking? How do we know if a message comes from an evil spirit or divination? How do we know if it comes out of somebody's imagination? What he is saying is, "We don't know!"

Now if we don't draw the line at Scripture, we are hopelessly caught. Once you go beyond Scripture

everything is out of control. Out of control. This is a major issue. The Charismatics have never given sufficient attention to it [or] supplied sufficient answer.

In closing, turn to 2 Timothy, chapter 3. 2 Timothy, chapter 3, a familiar text, I only read it to pull all these "loose ends" in a sense, together. The question I pose at the end is this, "Who needs new revelation? Who needs it? Why? Why would God give it? What would be the purpose?" If, listen to me carefully, the indwelling resident Spirit can lead you into the "Will of God" then you don't need some more revelation to do it. That's why the Spirit is there. Right? "As many that are lead by the Spirit are the children of God." He's there to lead you. You don't need some revelation to do it--He's there to do that.

Now, secondly, you say that, "Maybe God's giving more revelation because we need it for our spiritual lives." 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be (perfect), adequate, (complete), equipped for every good work." Listen, beloved, you don't need new revelation for direction in your life; the Spirit is there to lead you. You don't need new revelation for the virtue of your life; the Scripture is able to make you perfect. What's the point of allowing this confusion? Only this, that Satan uses it to pollute the clear stream of revelation laid out in the Word, and to confound and confuse the otherwise discernible leading of the Spirit of God in your life. Be warned of the prophecies that claim to be from God.

Father, we thank you for the time in the Word tonight. What a very vital subject. We pray that you will give us discernment, that we might examine all things; find what is good and cling to it; find what is evil and shun it. For Christ's sake. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-55, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 4. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 4, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Scriptures quoted in this message are from the New American Standard Bible.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 4**

# ***Proper Biblical Interpretation***

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Tonight, we have the great privilege, I think, of looking at a subject that is important to all of us. I am not going to be dealing with a specific text, although we will cover a number of texts before we are through tonight. But I want to carry on our special study of "Charismatic Chaos," looking and evaluating the Charismatic movement from the Word of God, by focusing on the issue of interpreting the Bible. One of the things that allows for the Charismatic movement to continue, to move ahead, is that it is engaged in misinterpretation of Scripture. I know that is a strong thing to say, but it is true. The movement continues at really an amazing pace, not only in America but around the world. And as it moves and catapults itself along it does so at the expense of Scripture.

There is, in my judgment, very little understanding, in the Charismatic movement, of proper Bible interpretation. Much of what exists in the Charismatic movement could be eliminated with just some very simple straight forward basic understanding of how to properly interpret the Bible. It falls technically under the title "Hermeneutics." Hermeneutics is a theologians word to explain the science of Bible interpretation. And Hermeneutics is a crucial building block in discerning theology. In fact, the

absence of Hermeneutics or misunderstanding of it feeds the Charismatic movement. Pentecostals and Charismatics tend to base much of their teaching on poor principles of Bible interpretation.

One of their own, a Pentecostal by the name of Gordon Fee, has written this,

Pentecostals, in spite of some of their excesses, are frequently praised for recapturing for the Church her joyful radiance, missionary enthusiasm, and life in the Spirit. But they are at the same time noted for bad Hermeneutics. First, their attitude towards Scripture regularly has included a general disregard for scientific exegesis and carefully thought out Hermeneutics. In fact, Hermeneutics has simply not been a Pentecostal thing. Scripture is the Word of God and is to be obeyed. In place of scientific Hermeneutics there developed a kind of pragmatic Hermeneutics. Obey what should be taken literally--spiritualize, allegorize, or devotionalize the rest. Secondly, it is probably fair and important to note that in general, the Pentecostal's experience has preceded their Hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostal tends to exegete his experience.

This is not, as I said, the appraisal of someone hostile to the movement, but the appraisal of one who is himself a Pentecostal. His assessment is "right on." You only have to watch the typical Charismatic television program to see exactly what he is talking about.

You might have watched, along with some of us, in horror sometime back if you happened to be watching the Trinity Broadcasting Network, they were interviewing a guest on one of their "Talk Shows," and he was explaining the Biblical basis of his ministry of "Possibility Thinking." This is a quote, "My ministry is based entirely on my life verse, Matthew 19:26, 'With God all things are possible.' God gave me that verse (Matthew 19:26) because I was born in 1926." Obviously, intrigued by that method of obtaining a life verse, the host grabbed a Bible and began thumbing through it excitedly. "I was born in 1934," he said. "My life verse must be Matthew 19:34! What does it say?" Then he discovered that Matthew 19 has only 30 verses! Undeterred, he flipped to Luke, and read Luke 19:34, and they said, "The Lord hath need of Him." Thrilled, he exclaimed, "The Lord has need of me, the Lord has need of me!" What a wonderful life verse. I never had a life verse before, but now the Lord has given me one. Thank You, Oh Jesus, Hallelujah. And the studio audience began to applaud.

At that moment, however, the "Talk Show" host's wife who had also turned to Luke 19, said, "Wait a minute, you can't use this. This verse is talking about a donkey!" That incident, while being absolutely ludicrous and bizarre, gives you some idea of the "willy-nilly way" that some Charismatics approach Scripture. Some of them, looking for a word from the Lord, play a sort of Bible roulette. They spin the Bible at random, looking for something that might seem applicable to whatever trial or need they are facing and they find a verse and say, "Well, the Lord gave me that verse." And then the Lord supposedly gave them the interpretation of it. These are silly and foolish ways to approach the study of the Bible.

Perhaps you have heard the familiar story of the man who wanted guidance about a major decision. He decided to close his eyes, not knowing where to look, wanted God to answer him. In the dilemma, he open his Bible, put his finger down to get guidance from whatever verse his finger happened to land on.

His first try brought him to Matthew 27:5, "Judas went out and hanged himself." Thinking that verse was really not much help, he decided to try again. This time his finger landed on Luke 10:37, "Go thou and do likewise." Still undeterred and not ready to give up he tried it a third time and his finger landed on John 13:27, "What thou doesn't, do quickly." Now I certainly don't want to vouch for the authenticity of that particular account, but it does make an important point.

Looking for meaning in Scripture through some mystical process is the way to get an ill gotten theology. Looking for meaning in Scripture beyond the Historical, Grammatical, Logical understanding of the context is unwise and dangerous. It is possible, of course, to substantiate almost any idea or any teaching from Scripture if you take it out of its context and twist it around. I remember hearing about the preacher who didn't think women should have their hair up on their head, because a woman's hair should be down. And so he preached against what used to be called "Bobbed Hair"--women having their hair up on their heads. His text was "Top Knot Come Down," taken from Matthew 24 where it says, "Let those on the housetop not come down." So if you just pullout, if you just pull out exactly what you want you can probably get it. We laugh at that because it sounds so bizarre, but that is precisely the process that many are using to substantiate their experiences or to invent their theology.

Now, the task of hermenutics is to realize first of all that there is a God given meaning in Scripture apart from you or me or anybody else. Scripture means something, [even] if it means nothing to me. Understood? It means something if it means nothing to you. It means something if it means nothing to anybody. It means something in itself and that meaning is determined by God the author, not by one who is going through some kind of mystical experience. The interpreter's task, then, is to discern that meaning; to discover the meaning of the text in its proper setting; to draw the meaning out of the Scripture, rather than to read one's meaning into it. The importance of careful Biblical interpretation can hardly be overstated. We spend three or four years at the Master's Seminary trying to teach men how to do this, because it is the heart and soul of effective ministry. In fact, I would go so far as to say, misinterpreting the Bible is ultimately no better than disbelieving it.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well, what good does it do to believe that the Bible is God's final and complete word if you misinterpret it? Either way, you miss the truth. Right? It is equally serious, along with disbelieving the Bible, to misinterpret it. Interpreting Scripture to make it say what it was never intended it to say is a sure road to division, error, to heresy, and to apostasy. In spite of all of the dangers of misinterpreting the Scripture, today we have these casual people who approach the Scriptures whimsically, without any understanding of the science of interpretation and make it say whatever they would like it to say. Perhaps you have been in one of those Bible studies where you go around the room and everybody tells you what they think the verse means. Or, worse than that, "Well to me, this verse means so and so." In the end what you get is a pooling of ignorance, unless somebody knows what it means apart from them. The truth is that it doesn't matter what a verse means to me; it doesn't matter what it means to you; it doesn't matter what it means to anybody else; it doesn't matter if it means anything to anybody else. All that matters is, "What does it mean? What did God intend to say?"

Every verse has intrinsic meaning apart from any of us and the task of Bible study is to discern the true meaning of Scripture. That's why I can come to you week after week, month after month, year after year,

and explain to you the meaning of the Word of God apart from any personal experience I'm having. That's irrelevant. The task of the interpreter is to discern the meaning of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 2:15, it says "Be diligent, or study to present yourself approved to God as a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed," because he's handling accurately the Word of Truth. If you don't handle it accurately, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. And if you are going to handle it accurately you have to be diligent; you have to work hard at it. Clearly, handling Scripture involves both of those things--hard work and diligence. It must be interpreted accurately, and those who fail to do that have reason to be ashamed.

Now there is so much to say about this that I can't give you a whole course in hermenutics. I teach some of that in the seminary as well as other professors, and I'm not intending to give you a seminary course. But, let me just suggest three errors that need to be avoided, that are not always avoided in contemporary interpretation. And they are very simple.

### 1. Do Not Make a Point at the Price of a Proper Interpretation.

It's like the preacher who said, "I have a good sermon if I could just find a verse to go with it." Do not prescribe your theology and then try to make the Bible fit it. You might have a good thought, a good idea. It even might be that the principle that you have in mind is true, but do not allow yourself to make the point at the price of a proper interpretation.

I remember reading years ago a good illustration of this found in the Jewish Talmud. One rabbi was trying to convince his people that the primary issue in life is concern for other human beings. That's good; a good point. We ought to be concerned about other human beings. But he wanted to illustrate it so he took them to the Tower of Babel, and he told them that the stones of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, the building of that through the carrying of those stones illustrated his point. He said that the builders of the Tower were frustrated because they put material things first and people last.

Now, where is that in Genesis? "Well," he said, "As the Tower grew taller, it took a hod carrier (a stone carrier) many hours to carry a load of stone up. The higher it got the longer the walk." And he said, "If a man fell off the tower on the way down nobody cared because you only lost a man--not the bricks. But if he fell off on the way up, they mourned because the bricks were lost. And that," said the Rabbi, "Is why God confused their language, because they failed to give priority to human beings over bricks!"

Now, none of that can be found in Genesis 11. None of that can be found in the Bible. In fact, it totally skews the meaning of Genesis 11. It is true people are more important than bricks, but that is not the point of the Tower of Babel. Genesis 11 says absolutely nothing about the importance of people or bricks. The point is, God is more important than idols, and God will judge idolatry.

I remember being at a Bible Conference in Wisconsin one time. And I got into this Bible Conference with another well known preacher, and we were preaching every night. And one day we were eating lunch and I said, "What are you going to preach on tonight?" He said, "I am going to preach on the Rapture of the Church." I said, "Really, the Rapture of the Church. Great!" What's your text?" He said,

"John 11." I said, "What?" He said, "John 11." "I said, "John 11? The Rapture of the Church isn't even in John 11." He said, "You wait and see tonight." I said, "Fine, fine." That night he preached on the Rapture from John 11. That's the resurrection of Lazarus. He allegorized it; Lazarus was the Church, Martha was the Old Testament saints, and Mary was the tribulation saints. And he got this thing going. And the people were just sitting their going, "Deep, deep!" You know they were just thinking this is the profoundest thing. They couldn't find it anywhere. They thought he was going deeper than they had capability to go. And afterwards, he said to me, "Had you ever seen that in John 11?" To which I replied, as kindly as I could, "No one has ever seen that in John 11!" And he took it as a compliment! The next night he got up and said, "John MacArthur told me, 'That no one but me had ever seen that in John 11.'"

Now, I don't want to argue with the Rapture of the Church, but I will argue that the Rapture of the Church is not in John 11. And if you are going to make John 11 say something that is true, then you are just as likely to make John 11 say something that what? Isn't true. That is not the way you approach Scripture. God has not hidden His truth from us but His meaning is not always instantly clear; it demands hard work. That's why in 1 Timothy 5:17 it says, "Those elders that labor in the Word and doctrine are worthy of double honor." Because it's hard work. That's why God has given teachers to the Church; so that we can work hard in understanding God's Word correctly, instructing people in the Scriptures through persistent conscientious labor in the Word.

Now, today we have, frankly, a lack of respect for the work of gifted theologians, a lack of respect for the hard work of gifted expositors who have spent years studying and interpreting Scripture. In fact, that lack of respect tends to be somewhat Charismatically characteristic. They tend to sort of look at all of us that way. I think I read to you the letter from the lady who said, "Your problem is, you're too much into the Bible. Throw away your Bible and stop studying." You see Charismatics place more emphasis on letting people in the congregation say whatever they think Jesus is telling them the verse means, than to listen to what one writer calls, "Airy Fairy Theologians." There is a vast difference, by the way, between the whimsical "kitchen table" interpretations of laymen, and the teaching of skilled men who work very hard to rightly divide the Word.

I heard a radio interview with a Charismatic woman pastor. She was asked how she got her sermons up. She replied, "I don't get them up--I get them down. God delivers them to me." That's an all too familiar thing. I can promise you that God has never delivered one to me. I haven't "gotten them down," I had to "get them up." Some people even believe its unspiritual to study. After all, some say, taking another verse out of context, "Didn't Jesus say, 'For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.'"

So you just go into the pulpit and whatever comes into your mind you say? And that is why they invent their theology even as they speak. Because they have no idea what's going to be said until they hear it. We should be greatly concerned about this ad-lib approach. You never, ever make a point, true or false, at the price of a proper interpretation. Otherwise, you are the final authority and not the Word of God.

## 2. Don't Spiritualize or Allegorize the Text.

Some people think the Bible is a fable to teach whatever you want to get across. A myriad of illustrations of this, but I remember back when Jerry Mitchell was on our staff and a young couple came into him for counseling--marriage counseling. He began to talk with them and after about 30 minutes, he said, "You'd been married only 6 months and you are already on the edge of a divorce? Why did you ever get married? You're miles apart." "Oh," said the husband, "it was a sermon that the pastor preached in our church." "What was the sermon?" "Well, he preached on the walls of Jericho." "Jericho? What does that have to do with marriage?" "Well, God's people claimed the city, marched around it seven times and the walls fell down." And he said, "If a young man believed God had given him a certain girl, he could claim her, march around her seven times, and the walls of her heart would fall down." "That's what I did and we got married." "That can't be true," he said. "Your kidding, aren't you?" I remember him saying that. "You got to be kidding!" "No, it's true. And there were many other couples who got married because of the same sermon." Some people believe their marriages were made in heaven; that one was made in an allegory, and a bad one at that.

That's the kind of interpretation that has gone on since the early days of the Church [and] continues today, especially in the Charismatic movement. I remember listening to a series on the Book of Nehemiah. The whole purpose of the Book of Nehemiah, by this Charismatic preacher was to teach Charismatic doctrine. Jerusalem walls were in ruin and that was representative of the broken down walls of human personality. Nehemiah was the Holy Spirit. The

King's pool was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. And the mortar between the bricks was tongues. And what Nehemiah is teaching, is the Holy Spirit wants to come, rebuild your broken walls through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues.

I had an opportunity to talk to that preacher about that and we had an interesting conversation. I tried to show him that, that was nothing but the invention of his own imagination--read from the New Testament back into the Old but never the intention of Nehemiah. To which he agreed. That kind of preaching is a form of "Hucksterism." And as I said, you may come up with a truth that you teach, but if you spiritualize the text to do it, then you legitimize spiritualization of any text, which leaves you with any fanciful conclusion.

For the correct approach, you probably need to go to Jesus and remember when He was walking on the road to Emmaus, He said, (Luke did), "That beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets he explained to them the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures." The word explain is hermeneuo (Greek) from which we get hermenutics. He carefully interpreted the Old Testament. He used hermenutics. He is the model of a teacher; He used sound interpretative methods.

So when we teach the Word of God; when we come to the conclusions that we come to, we want to be certain that we don't make severe errors:

1. By making points at the price of proper interpretations.

2. By somehow concocting or spiritualizing something that isn't there.
3. By superficial study. Superficial study is equally disastrous. Well, I have said enough about that not to have to say more.

Now, if that's the case, if we are to avoid doing that, how do we then interpret the Scripture? Let me give you five sound principles, all right? If you work through these you'll be on the way to rightly dividing the Word.

### 1. The Literal Principle

Principle number one we'll call the literal principle: the literal one. When we go to the Bible, this is so basic, we assume that God is talking to us in normal speech. Okay? Normal language. Normal, common, everyday communication. In fact, the theologians use to call it "Usus Loquendi" in the Latin, meaning, "The words of Scripture are to be interpreted the same way words are understood in ordinary daily use." If it says "horse," it means "horse." If it says, "He went somewhere, he went somewhere." If it says, "house," it means "house." If it says, "man," it means "man." And not everything is to be extrapolated off into some mystical spiritualization, allegorization, or whatever. It is literal. We understand Scripture, then, in the literal sense of language.

Now, there are figures of speech, there are simile, metaphor, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, whatever else, ellipsis, all of the figures of speech will be there. There may even be sarcasm, there may even be exaggeration as a device. There may be symbolism, such as the symbolism in the prophetic literature, which is obviously symbolic--clearly symbolic. But it is in the normal language of speech. We use symbols in our language. We say, "That man is as straight pine tree." Or, "That man is as strong as an ox." Well, we're using a symbol to make a literal point or statement. So then when we interpret the Bible, we are not hunting for some extrapolated mystical experience. Now, the Rabbis really got into this. They started to look for this long centuries ago, in fact, they use to say that (some of them said) Abraham had 318 servants. Nothing in the Bible says that, but they said, the secret meaning of the word Abraham is, in the Hebrew there is only three consonants in Abraham's name--Br, Ra, Hm. All the rest are vowels or breathing points. So, if you take the "Br, Ra, Hm," in his name, they had numerical equivalents in the Hebrew language, and add them up and you get 318! So the secret meaning is that he had 318 servants.

And they were into all that kind of stuff. And it even got more bizarre than that. There is occasionally, of course, figurative language in Scripture, as I said. But they are quite evident to us in the normal course of understanding language. Scripture was not written to puzzle people. It was not written to confuse them--it was written to make things clear to them. Even Parables are nothing more than illustrations. They are not riddles--they're illustrations, and in most cases Jesus explained their meanings. And in all cases He said that the meaning would be revealed to those who belong to Him by the Holy Spirit. So we can't abandon literal interpretation in favor of mystical, allegorical, metaphorical kinds of interpretation that discard all hope of achieving accuracy and coherence and throw us into some imaginary field.

I would venture to say that most Charismatic preaching is imagination run wild, proof-texted. They have, at least the popular part of it; I don't know whether "most" is a fair thing to say. But the popular part of it that I hear has much imagination and very little hermeneutics. When you do not take the time to discern the literal meaning you are not serving Scripture by trying to understand it; then you are making Scripture your slave by molding it into whatever you want it to say. So we start with the literal principle, its literal language.

## 2. A Historical Principle

Now, when the Scripture was written, they understood what was said clearly. Just like the Constitution: when it was written everybody understood what they meant. Here we are a few hundred years later trying to figure out what they meant. Why? Because history is different. Time has passed. Culture has changed. Circumstances have changed, and even language has changed. Modes of expression have changed. And so we are trying to get in touch with an old document and reconstruct what it must have meant to them when it was written. The same is true of the Bible, only it is much older than the Constitution. Any ancient document demands interpretation. And so what do we have to do to interpret it? We have to reset it into its historical context.

I am always amazed when I hear someone say, "John 3, 'You must be born of the water and the spirit,' means you must be born physically and you must be born spiritually." Have you heard that? And when a woman has a baby, there's water. We say, "The water breaks and the baby's born--that's born of the water. And spiritually, you are born of the Spirit." The problem is that in the Jewish context that wouldn't have been said, because the Jews didn't say "The water breaks." So what you've done is take an American colloquialism and read it into an ancient book that would mean absolutely nothing to those people. The question is, when He said, "You must be born of the water and the spirit"--what water would they think about? Right? What water was in the historical setting? The only water they would think about, in their Jewish context, particularly Nicodemus, would be that of Ezekiel who said, "The day is coming when God is going to wash you with clean water and put His spirit within you." And he would have put it into that context, the context of the New Covenant, not some colloquial American expression for human birth.

We must then understand the need for the historical principle. When Jesus walks in, for example, to the Temple courtyard, and said, "I am the light of the world." Why did He said that? Did He just go around saying strange things at strange moments? Just, "I'm the light of the world!" And somebody would say, "What did He say that for?" Or, why would He say, "I am the water of life, whoever drinks of this water, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water!" What is He talking about? Why does he outburst with these obtuse remarks? No, when He said, in John 8, "I am the light of the world," He was standing in the Temple courtyard and there was a huge candelabra that had been lit for eight straight days, in the feast of lights. And it had just gone out the day before and He walks into that very setting and says, in effect, "This thing has gone out but I'm the light of the world and I never go out. And when He said, "I am the water of life," they were going through the Hallel's, and they were celebrating the water that came out of the rock in the wilderness, and He said, "There was water then, but it was temporary. I am the water, and you drink this water--you'll never thirst but you will be a gushing well of water!"

Always the context gives the meaning. We've got to go back. What are the historical features? What are the characteristics of the city in which the believers lived who heard this? What was going on there? What were the politics? Who was ruling? What were the social pressures? What were the tensions, problems, and crisis that they were going through? What was the culture of the day? What was life like? What were customs like? I spend a great amount of my time researching all of that information so that when I get into the pulpit, I can make something clear. And I am always amazed, in fact, it happened a couple of times this morning, people came to me and said, "You know that passage is so clear--its so clear, I wonder why I have never seen it before?" The reason it was clear, the reason you understood it, is because I fed you the context in which it had its significance. It seemed simple and clear to you, a lot simpler than you know. It is simple to the one who was there and heard it the first time, but it is more complex to me, as I have to discern what they heard and how they heard it. That's part of the process.

To answer the cultural, historical questions, you use Bible dictionaries and books on history, and Bible handbooks, and commentaries, and books about Bible customs and so forth and so on.

### 3. Grammatical Principle

You go to a text of Scripture and you have to approach it grammatically. This is called syntax. Lexigraphy is the study of words, syntax is the study of the relationship of words. You have to learn about verbs and adverbs and adjectives and you have to learn about infinitives and participles and you have to learn about prepositions. You have to learn about conjugating verbs and you have to learn about cases for nouns and substantives. Ablative and genitive and all of that, accusative, nominative. You learn all of the structure of language. You have to learn about antecedents, about relationships. You have to learn about conditional and non-conditional clauses. You know what makes this really difficult now in seminary? The latest statistics that I've seen regarding our seminary, and we get the cream of the crop, we get the finest young men coming out of the universities of our nation, one out of four of the men coming into the Master's Seminary, one out of four can pass the basic English exam! One out of four! They can all talk English. They can all read English. They just don't understand the structure of language. And because they don't understand the structure of language, you can't teach them a foreign language until they do.

We have people today, who will never be able to understand the structure of the foreign languages Hebrew and Greek because they don't even understand the structure of English, trying to interpret the Bible! Now grammar is not anybody's favorite subject. Sorry, those of you who teach English. Grammar is just grammar! It just there and you have to learn it. But it is essential in interpreting the Word of God. People say to me, "What is the first thing you do when you prepare a message?" The first thing I do is study the Biblical text in the original language and learn the grammar and understand all of the word relationships: go over sentence structure and grammar so I know exactly what is being said and what modifies what, and how it all fits together.

In fact, more often than not, when I preach to you, the main idea that I am trying to get across to you is contained in the main verb. And the supporting ideas are contained in the participle that modifies the

main verb. Now, you can do this for yourselves by reading commentaries that will help you in the process; by doing inductive Bible study. Breaking down into diagramming sentences, remember that terrible thing you use to have to do, that nobody does anymore? But, that's all a part of discerning grammatical construction.

#### 4. The Synthesis Principle

The Old Reformers used the expression "Scriptura Intra Pratatum" (sp.). What that means is that Scripture is its own interpreter. And you use the Synthesis Principle. What does that mean? That I always interpret a given passage in the Bible in the light of the rest of the Bible. Right? I don't come across a passage and say, "Wow! This is a new doctrine taught nowhere else in the Bible." Wait a minute, if you think that passage is teaching a doctrine taught nowhere else in the Bible and appears contradictory to other things taught in the Bible--you've misinterpreted it. Right? Because Scripture will be consistent with itself. Why? One perfect author wrote it all. Who's that? God.

Scripture will interpret Scripture. The Holy Spirit won't disagree with Himself, and you can interpret the Word of God by the Word of God. That is a very, very, essential thing. And then one more principle.

#### 5. The Practical Principle

The final question you ask, you go through this whole process, starting out, "All right what's the literal meaning here?" Then you move to, "What's the historical background? The context? What are all the grammatical components here? How does this synthesize with the rest of Scripture? You hear me do that, don't you? I make a point and then I show you other verses where that point exists, in order to see that this is the Scripture teaching and elucidating on its own truth. And then the last question you ask is, "So what? What does it mean to me? What does it have to do with me? How does it apply to my life? But you never ask that question until you've gone through all the other steps. That's right. Most people today read the Bible and say all right, "What does this mean to me?" And they skip all the stuff in the middle.

By the way, I would recommend to you a helpful little book, if you want a good tool that's excellent for you. It's Dick Mayhue's book, "How to Interpret the Bible." It's a paperback. It will be a tremendous tool for you. I know that we have it in our book store. You can go in and buy them all out tonight.

Now, in the process of this, [there is] one more thing that I need to say. In these five principles of interpreting Scripture, there's another component, and that's the principle of the Holy Spirit and illumination. Even when I have taken it literally, and worked through the grammar, and reconstructed the history, and when I have delved into all the terms and the words and synthesize it with all of Scripture, all of that effort would come up empty if it weren't for the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. Because He alone knows the things that are coming from God, 1 Corinthians 2 says. And He is the one who teaches them to us. He is the anointing in 1 John 2:27, that teaches us all things.

You remember that verse, 1 John 2:27, John says, "The anointing which you have received from Him

abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." It's not telling us we don't need teachers; it's not telling us we don't need those who guide us, because He's given to the Church Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Teaching Pastors, and even teachers to teach us. And He has given some the gift of teaching and preaching, so that we can be taught. But it is an assurance that we can know the difference between the heresy that is being discussed in 1 John 2 and the truth regarding the Gospel of Christ, because we possess the Spirit.

It doesn't guarantee that we are going to have the correct interpretation of every verse in the Bible, even though we do nothing. It doesn't mean we don't need human teachers. It just means regarding the Gospel, regarding the basic truth of Christ, we can discern by the Holy Spirit leading--truth from error.

Now, in closing, just a suggestion, four texts are commonly misinterpreted by Charismatics. And I'll just apply what we have learned tonight to those four very briefly, to help you understand how easily they could be rightly understood.

The first one, I want you to turn to it, and we are not going to do all that we could do because you can buy my commentary or get the tape on the passage and go through it in detail. But, Matthew, chapter 12, is a good starting point because they use this quite often to intimidate Christians. In Matthew, chapter 12, you have the record of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And you remember that Jesus said, "Anything could be forgiven you, anything said against the Son of Man, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven you." If we had the time we could read from verse 22 all the way on, but just go down to verse 31, Jesus says, "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven."

Now, what is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Well, if you listen to two very popular Charismatics, by the name of Charles and Francis Hunter, well known husband and wife team, who have written numbers of books and speak on the road all the time, this is what they say. They say, that anyone who questions tongues, and this is pretty much what you hear from the Charismatic movement, anyone who questions tongues or any other aspect of the Charismatic movement is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They imply that any critic of the charismatic movement are perilously close to being condemned by Christ for such blasphemy. Is that what this is teaching? They use this verse to support that. Does a challenge to Charismatic error equal blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

When someone denies that tongues are for today or that the Baptism of the Spirit is a post-salvation experience, has that person committed the unpardonable sin? Not according to this passage. In this text you remember that a demon possessed man was born blind and dumb; [he was] brought to Jesus and He healed him. The Pharisees heard it; they said, "Jesus casts out demons by Satan." Remember that? "By Beelzebul," which was their name for the "Lord of the Flies," the Philistine Satan, the Prince of Evil Spirits. They were saying Jesus does what He does by the power of Satan.

Now, according to the principles of interpretation which we've just learned, the first thing to do would be

to look at the literal meaning of the passage. The Pharisees were literally saying, "Jesus Christ got His power from Satan." All right, we understand that. Let's move to the historical principle. Jesus' ministry had been going on for two years, and during that time He had been performing numerous miracles that proved to everyone, really it should have proved to everyone, that He was God. He was the Messiah. The conclusion should have been, "He is God!" Their conclusion was, "He functions under the power of Satan!" They concluded the exact opposite.

Using the synthesis principle, we go a step further. We check other parts of the Bible and we find that at His baptism Jesus received the Holy Spirit. And after being baptized, the Spirit of God descended as a dove [and] came upon Him. And then we learned that when Jesus went out and performed His miracles, it was the Spirit working through Him. He had yielded Himself up to the Holy Spirit. And so it was the Holy Spirit working in Him, casting out demons by the Spirit's power. They were coming along and saying He did it by Satan's power.

Blasphemy, then against the Holy Spirit, was attributing the works of Christ, done by the Spirit of God, to Satan. That's what blasphemed the Holy Spirit. It was being exposed to the full revelation of Christ's deity, seeing His miracles, hearing His teachings, and concluding He's satanic. For that, you can't be forgiven! Why? Because if you have seen it all and heard it all and you conclude that He's satanic--you can't get saved! Right? Because you've concluded exactly the opposite about Christ! That's the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in Matthew 12. It doesn't say anything about tongues. It doesn't say anything about the contemporary Charismatic movement.

We know that all of us as sinners resist the Holy Spirit. All of us who are convicted by the Holy Spirit and fight back at that conviction are resisting and in one way or another blaspheming Him, but still we can be saved. The only way you can blaspheme to the degree where you couldn't be saved is if you had had all the revelation and you concluded the opposite of the truth! You're unsavable! Because, in order to be saved, you have to acknowledge Jesus as God. Right?

First of all, the sin against the Holy Spirit referred to there is a historical event. And secondly, if there was some application to us, it would simply be rejecting Christ when you have full knowledge.

Look at another one, Hebrews 13:8, this is a very brief one, but again its a classic illustration of the way they work. Almost every Pentecostal Church you'll go into (certainly in the past this was true) will have a verse in the front of the Church, in the back of the Church, on a plaque somewhere--it'll be Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today, and forever," Have you ever been into a Pentecostal Church and seen that? It is in most all of them, or was. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today, and forever."

Now, why is that important? This is what they say, "If Jesus baptized with the evidence of speaking in tongues yesterday, then surely He is doing it today and He'll be doing it tomorrow. And so they used that to say, "Whatever Jesus did in the past, He's doing now, [and] He'll be doing in the future. The silliness of that interpretation is that tongues never started until Acts 2! So, though Jesus is the same yesterday,

throughout all the yesterday of His eternal existence, He didn't do that! You see how obvious that is? Then you say, "Now, wait a minute. In the yesterday He did miracles." No, no, no, not in the yesterday of His eternal existence. Before the world began He wasn't doing miracles. And before the world began He wasn't sending the Spirit in cloven tongues of fire.

You see what you have here is a statement about the eternal, immutable, essence of Christ. That He is eternal, yesterday, today, and forever, and unchanging in His essence. Not that He has always, is, and will always do everything the same way.

Well, we don't have time to look at the other Scriptures. One favorite they like is Mark 16, which says, "That these signs will follow those that believe . . . they will cast out demons, speak with new tongues." They love to emphasize that. They are not so hot on picking up snakes and drinking deadly poison. And then it says, "It will not hurt them if they drink it and they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." They say, "See, we can heal the sick! And see, we can speak in tongues! And see, we can cast out demons!" But they don't advocate picking up snakes and drinking deadly poison! In fact how they handle that--I need to just tell you how they handle that.

The Hunter's, for example, say,

Well, that only counts if you pick up the snake accidentally. Is that what it says in Mark's Gospel, "If you happen to pick up a snake accidentally?" Or, it only matters if you drink the poison accidentally. In fact, they write, do you notice the Bible says, "If we drink anything poisonous," it means accidentally. It won't hurt us. Hallelujah, best insurance policy we know of.

Now, the problem with their interpretation is its not literal. There is no accidentally there. Furthermore, historically, He's talking about the Apostolic age and those who responded to the ministry of the Apostles. They even go so far as to make the silly remark, "And of course, we all know that the biggest snake is Satan, and when he bites us, God delivers us from his deadly poison," which just allegorizes the thing--spiritualizes it. They play fast and loose.

The concern that I have is to share with you just the sense that there is an awful lot of irresponsibility in dealing with these texts. And for you sake and mine, we need not, listen carefully to me, we need not just to criticize the movement. We need to be able to go beneath and to show where the critical flaws lie.

One text in closing, and you know it very well, 2 Timothy 2:15. Just to remind you, so you're armed if you get into any conversation with folks like this. "Be diligent to present yourself approved of God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed." And then the last phrase, "Handling accurately the word of truth." Beloved, this is where we must lay down the law. We must protect the integrity of Scripture by demanding a proper interpretation. That phrase, "handling accurately," means "cutting it straight." Paul was a tent maker and in order to make a tent he had to cut a lot of pieces of material, either hide or woven hair. If he didn't cut the parts right, like making a dress or a shirt, that the whole didn't fit together. Right? You cut the parts right; you sew them together, it works. And he is saying, if you don't cut the

pieces right the whole theology doesn't fit together and what you've got is people hacking up the pieces and putting together an obtuse bizarre theology that does not make sense, is not coherent.

We must know how to rightly divide the word of truth. Because if we don't, mishandling the Scriptures and not interpreting it properly just feeds endless confusion. And that is why there is so much Charismatic chaos.

Father, thank you for our time tonight and looking over these things and considering some of the basics of Bible interpretation. Make us faithful. And Lord help us again to realize that many people in this movement love you and are victimized. They are victimized by these foolish interpretations that are given to them very authoritatively, by people who sound convincing. We pray that your Spirit would give them great discernment. We know that your Spirit will grant them to discern if they are true believers, between heresy about the gospel and the truth of the gospel. And we can only ask that somehow your Spirit would lead them to true teachers who will teach them the right interpretation of Scripture so they would not be confused and thus miss the privilege and opportunity of spiritual growth and giving you glory that you deserve. Lord thank you for giving us exposure to those who rightly divided the Word so that we could follow in their stead. Make us faithful to that Word which rightly understood, must be applied. And all for your glory in Christ's Name. Amen.

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-56, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 5. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 5, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 5**

### ***Does God do Miracles Today?***

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In our ongoing study of the Charismatic movement today, I want to jump right into a subject that I know I can't completely cover. But I want you to learn to think Biblically about this because I am very concerned about it.

Today, we hear an awful lot of talk about miracles. Somebody says, "I had a financial need and a miracle happened. The mailman came and in the mail was a check for just the amount of money I needed. It was a miracle!" Or, you hear someone say, "I went to the Mall and there was a parking place right by the entrance. It was a miracle!" Or, a mother might sense something wrong in an adjoining room and investigate just in time to stop her little toddler from putting a paper clip into an electrical outlet or something, and say, "It was a miracle!" Or, maybe you were thinking and praying for somebody and just seemingly at the time you were doing that, the phone rang and it was the very person that you were thinking about and they were right there to be encouraged. And you say, "That was a miracle!"

Well, we call those things miracles, but they are not miracles. A miracle is a supernatural event which has no human explanation. More than that, a miracle is a supernatural event which suspends natural law. In other words, natural law stops and is suspended while God acts; moves back out and then the natural

course continues.

When you find a place to park at the Mall, when you catch your little toddler just at the right moment, or when you get a check for what you needed, or when a friend calls at precisely the right moment in time, those would be acts of providence. Those would be acts whereby God is simply orchestrating natural events; not suspending the natural, but controlling the natural so that it does what He wants it to do.

A miracle then is an extraordinary event wrought by God that cannot be explained by any natural means. That would be the technical definition. It might sound something like this,

A miracle is an event in nature, so extraordinary in itself, and so coinciding with a prophecy or a command of a religious teacher or leader as fully to warrant the conviction on the part of those who witness it, that God has wrought it with the design of certifying that this teacher or leader has been commissioned by Him.

Now, that takes us to another dimension, and I wanted to read that. That's from Augusta Strong written way back in 1907. And what he is saying there is, that anytime a miracle occurs, it is associated with the certification of a teacher or a leader commissioned by God. Theologians prior, of course, to the Charismatic movement, the Pentecostal movement in this century, were united in the understanding that miracles did not happen randomly. They did not happen through history in a "willy-nilly" sort of way. God did not do them capriciously, or whimsically. There wasn't a continual flow of miracles at all times and places through Church history, but rather, miracles, that is God stepping into the natural world suspending natural law, doing something that had no natural explanation and pulling back out again and letting natural law then run its course, did that only in certification of a specially commissioned teacher. In fact, miracles in Scripture all the way from Exodus through Deuteronomy, to Nehemiah, through the Psalms, Jeremiah, Daniel, into the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Hebrews--miracles are called "signs and wonders."

They are signs. And what is a sign for? A sign is to point to something. And what were they signs of? They were signs authenticating a divinely commissioned teacher. When God, supernaturally, superhumanly, suspended natural law, and acted in human history. He did so as a sign to point to a teacher who was speaking for Him.

I've collected through the years a very large file of supposed miracles. They range all the way from 1977's newspaper article about Maria Rubio of Lake Arthur, New Mexico, who was frying tortillas in her kitchen. She noticed that one of them seemed to have the likeness of a face etched in the burn marks. She concluded that it was Jesus, and even built a crude shrine to the tortilla! Thousands of people visited the Shrine of the Jesus of the Holy Tortilla, and concluded that it was indeed a miracle. "I do not know why this has happened to me!" Mrs. Rubio said, "But God has come into my life through this tortilla!" (from the Chicago tribune)

In 1980, in Deptford, New Jersey, Bud Ward, the town's fire dept photographer was driving with his wife

when he accidentally took a wrong turn. Noticing flames in an abandoned chicken coup behind the Naples Pizzeria, he pulled into the parking lot and began taking pictures. When the slides came back from K-Mart Ward's nine year old daughter noticed what seemed to be an image of Christ in one of the photographs. Word of this discovery spread and soon people from all over New Jersey were talking about the "Pizza Jesus of Deptford Township." Several people knelt and prayed under the image projected from the slide and others asked that the image be projected onto their chests. Hundreds believed that it was a true miracle. Again, according to the Gloucester Country Times.

Such apparitions are often seen as miracles. In August of 1986, in Fostoria, Ohio, the image of Jesus seemed to appear every night in the shadows and rust marks on the side of a soybean oil storage tank. Hawkers sold thousands of "I saw the vision" tee-shirts and coffee mugs to those who came to see the miracle. Nearly a year later, Arlene Gardner of Estill Springs, Tennessee noticed that when their neighbors turned on their porch light the image of a face appeared in the glow reflected off her freezer. She believed it was the face of Jesus, although several observers said it looked more like Willie Nelson. Arlene and her husband were so convinced that it was a true miracle, they quit the church when the pastor expressed skepticism.

Well, eventually, such skepticism is a rare commodity these days. People's hunger for the mysterious and the astonishing and phenomena is at a level unsurpassed in the history of the Church. It's pretty popular stuff in the secular world and it has found its way into the Church. Eager to witness miracles, many people seem willing to believe that almost anything unusual is a genuine heavenly wonder. The problem with that is, it poses a severe danger for the Church, because it plays right into the hands of Satan, doesn't it? False wonders and false signs, false miracles--extremely believable ones, the Bible tells us will be the primary tool of Satan in the end times. Jesus said, "False Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect." Then He added, as if knowing that many would ignore the warning, "Behold, I have told you in advance" (Matt 24:24-25).

Surely in the light of the warning of Jesus and the warnings of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, we should have a healthy skepticism on the part of these supposed miracles. Now, I want you to understand, that I am not by nature a skeptic. I am not a naturalist and a humanist and an anti-supernaturalist. I believe in miracles. I believe that every miracle recorded in the Bible literally happened exactly as the Bible described it. I believe, for example, that Moses and the Israelites actually walked through the parted Red Sea and didn't get their feet wet or muddy. I believe that Elijah raised a widow's young son from the dead. And that fire called down from heaven was actually heavenly fire and consumed water. I believe with absolute conviction that Elisha made an axe head float, an iron axe head. I believe that all the healings signs and wonders attributed to Jesus in the four gospels happened exactly and precisely as they are recorded there. And I believe the Apostles literally performed all the miracles which the New Testament describe.

That's not all. I believe God can still do miracles. I believe all things are possible with God, as Matthew 19:26 says. His power has not diminished the least since the days of the Early Church. But even though I believe all of that and I believe that if God chooses to do something miraculous He can do it, I am convinced that most of the miracles, signs and wonders, if not all, being claimed today in the Charismatic

movement have nothing in common with what we know about Biblical miracles. They do not fit the Biblical criteria. And I am persuaded by both Scripture and history that nothing like the New Testament gift of miracles, noted in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, is operating today. The Holy Spirit has not given any modern day Christians miraculous gifts comparable to those He gave the Apostles.

Now in spite of that, many Charismatics are making quite remarkable claims. Oral Roberts, for example, speaking at the Charismatic Bible Ministry Conference, in 1987, said, "I can't tell you about all the dead people I've raised. I've had to stop a sermon, go back and raise a dead person." No less an authority than Dr. C. Peter Wagner, Professor of Church Growth at Fuller Seminary, School of World Mission, believes such things do happen,

I too now believe that dead people are literally being raised in the world today. As soon as I say that, some ask if I believe if it is normative? I doubt if it would be normative in any local situation but it probably is normative in terms of the universal Body of Christ. Even though it is an extremely uncommon event I would not be surprised if it were happening several times a year.

John Wimber of "The Vineyard" lists raising the dead as one the basic elements of any healing ministry.

Now, with the supposed large number of people being raised from the dead, you would imagine that somebody could manage to come up with one who could give testimony to the validity. But not one modern occurrence of raising the dead can be verified. You say, "What about Oral Roberts' claim the he has raised many people?" Well, he was challenged to produce the names and addresses of the people he raised and he balked. Later he recalled only one incident more than 20 years before when he had supposedly raised a dead child in front of 10,000 witnesses. "During a healing service," he recalled, "A mother in the audience jumped up and shouted, 'My baby is dead!'" Roberts said he, "prayed over the child and it jerked, it jerked in my hand." Roberts conceded that neither that child nor others he said he had brought to life had been pronounced clinically dead. "I understand," he hedged, "there is a difference in a person dying and not breathing and a person being clinically dead."

Well, what are we suppose to make out of that confusion? It certainly is a far cry from Jesus raising Lazarus, who had been four days in the grave. And if, as Dr. Wagner supposes, dead people are literally being raised several times a year, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect that he would bring one along so that we could meet him or her? The truth is, those who claim miracles today are not able to substantiate their claims. Unlike the miracles in the New Testament which were usually done with large crowds of unbelievers watching who would be skeptical, modern miracles typically happen either privately or in some religious meeting where there are a lot of people who are in a wild kind of frenzy expecting a miracle, where it is a lot easier to fabricate one in the imagination.

And the types of miracles that are being claimed today are absolutely nothing like New Testament miracles: absolutely nothing like them. In fact, the types of miracles today could be distinctly seen as different than New Testament miracles. Jesus and the Apostles instantly and completely healed people born blind, a paralytic, a man with a withered arm, all obvious indisputable miracles. Even Jesus'

enemies didn't challenge the reality of His miracles and He had the people there to verify them. He raised the dead, of course, as we well know. They never did a miracle that was slow. They never did a miracle that took time. They never did a miracle that was less than permanent. By contrast, most modern miracles are partial, gradual, temporary, sometimes reversed and almost impossible to verify. And the only instant miracles today seem to be those that deal with psychosomatic diseases. People with visible disabilities are rarely, if ever, helped at all by modern faith healers.

I recently watched a televangelist interview a man he had supposedly healed of lameness. The man said he was free from his wheelchair for the first time in several years, however, the man was walking with crutches and had heavy braces on his legs. That's not a miracle at all like any in the Scriptures. No modern miracle worker claims the kind of unequivocal success seen in the ministry of Christ and His Apostles.

Now there are some in the Charismatic movement who try to defend these supposed miracles which are not verifiable by saying that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, so it's the same Jesus today. The Holy Spirit is still with us today, and therefore with Him we have the Age of Miracles. David DuPlasee (sp.) who is sort of the patriarch of the movement, who has been called "Mr. Pentecost," believed (he's dead now) that the Age of Miracles never ended, and that we are still in the Age of Miracles. And he said that the miracles and the events described in the Book of Acts should be normative throughout the Church's history. And it is that view that most Pentecostals and Charismatics hold, that whatever the Holy Spirit did in the past, He is still doing now; that miracles go on and on as long as there is the Holy Spirit. They say that the Holy Spirit never changed. They say the Early Church changed; it became doctrinal; it became formal; it became ritualistic, and so the Holy Spirit pulled back His power, and now after nearly 2,000 years He's released it again. And the thing that always amazes me is, if the Holy Spirit were going to release His power, why would He release it to authenticate the people who teach bad theology? If He wanted to authenticate anybody with miracles, you could be sure it would be those who were the truest and the purest and the most profound and Biblical, and the most skilled and dedicated teachers of the Word of God who were teaching the truth.

Many Pentecostals and Charismatics talk about the restoration of the New Testament Holy Spirit Power through their movement. They say they are doing again what the Apostles did in the first century. Is that true? If so, why do modern revelations, visions, tongues, healings, and miracles differ so dramatically from those done by the Apostles. And why is it that they're associated with people who do not understand properly the truth of God? And if miracles, and signs and wonders are so vital, then why is it that for nearly 2,000 years the Holy Spirit didn't do any? Do you mean that there weren't even a few people around who would have been worthy of such? Should Christians today expect miracles? Is Oral Roberts right when he says, "Everyone of you out there should expect your miracle today?" Are we supposed to be able to do miracles? Heal people? Raise the Dead?

Well, in answer to all of this we need to take a look at Scripture, and I want to give you just a fast look and overview at this matter of miracles, that I think will set your thinking in the right frame.

Most Biblical miracles happened in one of three relatively brief periods of Biblical history. You need to note this. Most Biblical miracles happened in three relatively brief periods of Bible History:

1. The days of Moses and Joshua
2. During the ministries of Elijah and Elisha
3. In the time of Christ and the Apostles

None of those periods lasted much more than a hundred years. Each of them, each of the three, experienced a proliferation of miracles unheard of at other times in God's redemptive history. But even during those three times, miracles were not just normal everyday occurrences that happened to anybody and everybody. The miracles that did happen in the time of Moses and Joshua--involved Moses and Joshua! The miracles that happened in the time of Elijah and Elisha, happened around the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. And the miracles that happened to Christ and the Apostles and through them, happened through their ministries.

There weren't just miracles happening all over everywhere to all kinds of people. And aside from those three intervals, the only other miracles recorded in Scripture are very, very, isolated events. It is true in the days of Isaiah, the Lord miraculously defeated Sennacherib's army, then healed Hezekiah and turned the Sun's shadow back (2Kings 19-20). It is true, in the days of Daniel, God miraculously preserved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the furnace (Daniel 3). But those are very uncommon and very unusual. It is true that God did miraculously preserve Jonah in the belly of a great fish. But for the most part, those are very isolated. And miracles like those didn't happen to God's people as a course of life. Now, God, of course at anytime can inject Himself into the human stream supernaturally, and do a miracle. But He chose to limit Himself primarily to three periods of history, and very rarely will you ever find a miracle in the times in between. The rest of the time God just works through providence. He doesn't need a miracle: He can just work through providence. The reason that He did a miracle is because a miracle can only be attributed to God. It can only be explained supernaturally, and there were times when that was crucial.

Let me give you some points. Three characteristics of the miracles in Scripture will help you understand this:

1. Miracles Introduced New Eras of Revelation.

All three of those periods of miracles were times when God gave His written revelation.

- a. Moses and Joshua--the time of the giving of the Law.
- b. Elijah and Elisha--introduced the prophetic office, the prophetic age, and all of the Books of Prophecies (Major Prophets, Minor Prophets).

c. New Testament--obviously. Christ did miracles, the apostles did miracles. That introduced the era of the New Testament revelation.

So whenever God was going to pour out His word, he wanted to certify certain prophets and teachers of His word; to authenticate them. Moses was given the power to do certain miracles that people might know he spoke as God's spokesman. There was no other way to explain what God used him to do other than, "God was doing it," and therefore this was God's man; and when he spoke, he spoke for God. And the same was true in Joshua's case when he wrote his book. You come to Elijah and Elisha and the miracles that attended their ministry as they were the prophets of God, and they were introducing a very long era of prophetic literature as God revealed Himself through the prophets, of which, really, they were sort of the introducers. And even those rare miracles that occurred in other eras, involved people who were used by God to write Scripture.

Hezekiah's healing involved Isaiah; the three men in the fiery furnace involved Daniel. Those two were what we call "Major Prophets," who spoke and wrote for God. Moses performed many miracles in an attempt to convince Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go, to convince Pharaoh that this was not some normal man. This was not some natural man, but this was God's man who spoke for God. Miracles seemed to accompany the Israelites on their journey out of Egypt, and miracles came in their journey through the wilderness to remind the people of God that God was their God, and that Moses was God's spokesman. How else would they know who to listen to? They certainly didn't want to listen to Aaron or anybody else. And even when God gave His law to Moses on the mount, Moses encounter with God was accompanied by signs so dramatic--fire, smoke, a trumpet, a thundering voice, that even Moses himself knew it was the voice of God (and Hebrews 12 says, it was fearful). And thus began the first period of revelation. And Moses recorded the truth of the Pentateuch (the five books), and Joshua wrote the book that bears his name. Other books were added intermittently after the time of Moses and Joshua, Samuel probably wrote Judges and 1st and 2nd Samuel, David wrote the Psalms, Solomon penned most of the Wisdom literature. But those books were not accompanied by the great outpouring of miracles that had distinguished the days of Moses and Joshua. They were kind of a continuation in some ways of that revelatory era.

The second major cluster of miraculous events accompanied a new era of Biblical revelation, "The Age of the Old Testament Prophets." Following Solomon's reign the nation of Israel divided into the northern kingdom, Israel; the southern kingdom, Judah. The northern Kingdom quickly deteriorated because of idolatry and hit a low point under King Ahab. Remember his wife Jezebel? At that time God raised up two spokesmen, Elijah and Elisha. The prophetic office in their lifetime was marked by dramatic miracles to certify them as the spokesmen for God and to call back the people to God. The prophets that followed them were the continuation of that era. Then when that era closed out and the Old Testament was done, there was a 400 year period of silence in which no prophet spoke for God and no miracle is recorded to have occurred.

Then came the New Testament, and the first miracle was the Virgin Birth. And then the miracles began to flow out of the life of Christ, and they began to flow out of His Apostles. Why? Because it was a new

era of writing the revelation of God--The New Testament. Always the miracles were associated with the certification of those who were giving us God's revelation.

2. The second point, and that is the point we just led into, "Miracles Authenticated the Messengers of Revelation." They only happened in three eras and they authenticated the messengers of revelation. Elijah raised the widow's dead son. And what was the widow's reply? Verse 24 of 1 Kings 17, she said, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of Lord in your mouth is truth." That's a very important verse. That's the whole purpose. So that anybody listening to Elijah would know this man is a man of God and in his mouth is the word of the Lord and it is true.

You come into the New Testament in John 10, Jesus having a confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders: they challenged Him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus said, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me." He was saying, "The miraculous works that I do authenticate me and my message as being from God." In his Pentecost sermon, Peter told the crowd that Jesus was a man attested to them by God with miracles, wonders and signs. And the same kind of power belonged to the Apostles. You'll remember that on Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas were ministering at Iconium, and it says, "They were speaking boldly, with reliance on the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands." Beloved, that is always the intention of the miracle. God does not need to do miracles for everybody to accomplish His will. He does not need to do miracles for every Christian everyday to prove His love. He does not need to do miracles everyday to make people believe He exists. He only authenticates the Word, and when the authenticated Word is revealed there is no need any longer to authenticate a preacher. You can find out whether he speaks for God by comparing Him with this [Bible]. And God can still control everything without ever doing a miracle through providence.

It's foolish to assume that everybody should be able to do a miracle; that we can go to a seminar in four days and learn how to do miracles. It's equally foolish to assume that God is going to do miracles for you everyday. People who keep saying they saw this miracle and that miracle have got caught up in the fact that everything is a miracle, and their definition of miracles lacks greatly Biblical parameters.

The Apostles performed miracles, signs and wonders, in Acts 5. Why? To call attention to the fact that they were supernatural servants of the living God, who spoke the truth. In Acts 15, it says, "The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders that God had done among the Gentiles through them." These things that mark an Apostle, signs and wonders, and miracles, Paul said to the Corinthians, "Were done among you." They mark an Apostle.

Moses, Joshua, introduced an era of revelation. Elijah, Elisha, introduced an era of revelation. Jesus and the Apostles introduced an era of revelation. And with all the spokesmen and no written word, with all the spokesmen, God had to authenticate the right spokesman, and so He gave them the power to do supernatural things in order that people might know this is no human mortal teacher, this is a man of God who speaks the truth.

3. Thirdly, and tied right in with the others, miracles are designed to call attention to the revelation. Miracles are designed to call attention to the revelation. God did the miracle so that the people would listen to the Word and see it as His truth. The miracle didn't stand alone--that's the point. God doesn't do miracles for miracle's sake. The purpose of the miracle was the effect of the miracle. For example, the miracles Moses did in Egypt were meant to enlighten two groups, the Israelites and the Egyptians. In Exodus 7, we read about Moses' first miracles and it was then that the Israelites started to believe in the power of their God. Pharaoh was a "hard case." He didn't believe until the tenth miracle, "the Death Angel," then he finally let them go.

But the purpose of the miracle was not just to stand on its own, but the purpose of the miracle was to get people to understand that God had something to say! The miracles of Elijah and Elisha were effective in convincing both believers and unbelievers that what these men spoke was the Word of God. And a graphic illustration of that can be seen in 1 Kings 18, where Elijah defeated 400 Prophets of Baal before a large crowd of Israelites, and the Scripture says, "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God; The Lord, He is God.'" They believed.

In the New Testament, miracles and signs were again used to confirm believers and convince unbelievers. John said the miracles of Jesus were done so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you might have life in His name; and the same was true with the Apostolic miracles.

Only three eras, always to authenticate those who spoke the revelation of God, and always with the purpose of pointing to the revelation so that it is the revelation that is the important thing! And beloved, I submit to you, that if you have this Book in your hand--you have what is the end product of God's miraculous intervention. This is the purpose for which He did the miracles. You possess this--you don't need the miracles! You have what God intended them to produce. And that is why Jesus said it as simply as it could be said, "If they do not believe Moses and the Prophets (that is Scripture), they will not believe though someone be raised from the dead."

You must remember the people of Israel who saw the miracles of Moses, the whole generation died in the wilderness--in what? Unbelief! You must remember that the people who heard the prophets speak for God, for the most part, refused to believe. One whole kingdom apostatized--the northern kingdom; and in the southern, only a remnant. All those who saw the miracles of Jesus did not believe: only a small group. And when it came down to it in the Book of Acts, there were 120 of them dedicated enough to [be] believing the Lord, that they were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Miracles have never produced wholesale belief. They can't. They are intended to point to the truth, and it is the truth which produces faith, of course as the Spirit energizes it.

Now, the question comes, "Are miracles necessary today?" When the Old and New Testaments were completed God's revelation was finished. Through many signs and wonders He has authenticated the veracity of this Book. Anybody who reads it can see that it's true. Does God have to keep doing miracles? Is there a need for ongoing miracles to substantiate the Bible? Should everybody with faith

claim a miracle? Does God do miracles on demand? Are the phenomena that are occurring today, hailed as "signs and wonders and healings," really necessary and authentic? The answers to all those questions is no. Nothing in Scripture indicates that the miracles of the Apostle's Age were meant to be continuous. [If] you keep reading in the Book of Acts and you will get to the part in the Book of Acts where you finally say to yourself, "I haven't read a miracle in a long time," and you'll finish the whole book and never see another one! They had begun to cease even in the Book of Acts.

Charismatics today believe that the spectacular and miraculous gifts were given for the edification of believers. Does God's Word support that? No! They were not given for the edification of believers; they were not given to edify Christians; they are a sign for those who do not believe: for those who need to see that this is God's Word. Whether you are talking about tongues or healings or miracles, they served as signs to authenticate an era in which God was giving new revelation and people needed to listen. B. B. Warfield, that great Presbyterian professor of the past generation, writing in 1918, said,

Miracles do not appear on the pages of Scripture vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently, without assignable reason. They belong to "revelation periods" and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers declaring His gracious purpose. Their abundant display, in the Apostolic Church, is the mark of the richness of the Apostolic Age in revelation.

You realize, don't you, that between about 36 A.D. and 95 A.D., all 27 books of the New Testament were written. And so there was a proliferation of authentication because of the vast volume of literature being revealed in a brief period of time. Warfield goes on,

When this revelation period closed the period of "Miracle Working" had passed by also as a mere matter of course. God the Holy Spirit has made it His subsequent work, not to introduce new and unneeded revelations into the world, but to diffuse this one complete revelation through the world and to bring mankind into the saving knowledge of it.

Abraham Kiper (sp.) the Dutch theologian writes this in 1898,

It has not been God's way to communicate to each and every man a separate store of divine knowledge of his own, to meet his separate needs. But He rather has spread a common board for all, and invites all to come and partake of the richness of the great feast.

I want to stop in that quote to say, that is such a very important rebuke to the contemporary Charismatic movement which assumes that God talks to everybody individually, has special revelation for everybody, separate information for everybody to meet everybody's individual needs. That is not the case. Abraham Kiper is right when he says,

He [God] has spread a common board for all, and invites all to come and partake of the richness of the great feast. He has given to the world one organically complete revelation, adapted to all, sufficient for all, provided for all, and from this one completed revelation he requires each to draw his whole spiritual

sustenance. Therefore, it is that the miraculous working which is but the sign of God's revealing power cannot be expected to continue, and in point of fact, does not continue after the revelation of which it is the accompaniment has been completed.

Great statement. In Acts, chapter 7, as Stephen preached his famous sermon, he talked about Moses who performed wondrous signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness, "And received living oracles to pass on to you," Stephen said. Note how God's Word draws the parallel between Moses' signs and the living oracles--the direct revelation from God which he was to pass on. Hebrews 2:3-4 confirms that the validation of the New Testament writers was purposed to cause folks to see them as the agents of God's revelation, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." He was authenticating the Apostles--the writers of Scripture.

Does God promise miracles for everybody? No! He never has: it's not their purpose. You hear Charismatics say, "God has a special miracle for you today!" No, He doesn't! "You better be seeking your private miracle. If you're not getting it, it's because you don't believe strongly enough." Not true! By the way, Jesus didn't do any private miracles, they were all public. And they were, as I said, to authenticate the one who spoke for God.

There is so much more that can be said about this, and there will be much more in the book. But I just want to wrap this up in the last five minutes or so.

If you are going to say that God is doing miracles today, and be Biblically consistent, you are going to have to say that, "God is also. . ." What? Giving what? Revelation. And if God is giving revelation, it will be coming through the people who are what? Doing the miracles. And I will say this for the Charismatics, they are at least logically consistent in that sense. They have got the whole package--God is giving revelation. He is still giving it. The people who are getting it have miracle power in their view. And what is the next logical step? To call them . . . what? Apostles. And that is what they are doing.

We are now having a pretty common movement in the Charismatic scene, labeling people as Apostles. Earl Palk (sp.), quite a prominent Charismatic, teaches that certain anointed individuals have been called to be Apostles. Jack Deere (sp.), former professor at Dallas Seminary, the chief theologian of John Wimber's movement, isn't certain that Apostolic ministry is functioning today, but he told a workshop in Sidney, he, "Is convinced that Apostolic power is coming," listen to this, "and the new Apostolic age will be greater than the first!" We are going to get the whole package back. New Apostles doing new signs and wonders, receiving new revelation to produce a "New Bible?"

You want to look at this very carefully, beloved. This almost looks like a plot to deceive the whole Church. Doesn't it? The Apostolic office isn't for today. The Church was founded upon the Apostles, Ephesians 2:20, they were the foundation. You don't put the foundation on the 20th story. The Apostles were all eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Eyewitnesses to the risen Christ! They were chosen personally

by Jesus Christ. They were authenticated by miraculous signs. They had absolute authority, and they were given an eternal, unique place of honor, Revelation 21:14 says that Heaven, the city of the New Jerusalem, has a wall with twelve foundation stones, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. There are only twelve! You can argue who the twelfth was, some say Matthias, some say Paul, Judas being excluded. You might want to say Matthias, and Paul was an apostle in due time, kind of an addendum.

But the point is, there are only twelve of those honored places. Each of them will rule over one of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Kingdom. There is not room for more than twelve folks. They are a special breed. They had no successors. The age of the apostles is over because the age of authentication is over, because the age of revelation is over. You say, "Oh, MacArthur, you have a weak view of God." No I don't! I have a strong view of God. I think that He is consistent with Himself. And I think He is true to His revelation. Jerry Horner, Associate Professor of Biblical Literature at Oral Roberts, said, "Who in the world wants a God who has lost all of His zip?" Well, has God lost His zip? Has He done nothing significant in 2,000 years? That's hardly the case. He has got plenty of zip, in fact, he is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, beyond all you can ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

He had a special purpose for the eras of revelation. He has a different purpose now, just as powerful, just as wonderful. Don't buy into the deception that there is something beyond the Scripture, because that's what this deception is saying; that there is somebody getting a revelation; that there is somebody with apostolic authority; that miracles are supposed to be happening all over the place. It's not true. It's not consistent with Scripture.

Father, we thank You, that we can look at Your Word tonight, and in just this brief time discern its truth again. Help us to have that discernment. And Lord help us to believe that You don't have to do a miracle to show Yourself. Providence, in many ways, is a greater miracle than a miracle. It would be easier to do something supernatural than it is to orchestrate all of the infinite contingencies of life and make them work Your purpose, but You do it every moment of every day. Thank You for Your Word which needs no update, for the authenticated messengers gave us the once for all, delivered to the Saints, faith on which we rest. We ask Lord that You will keep us true to Your truth. Don't let us get led astray, for Jesus sake. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-57, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 6. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 6, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 6**

### ***The Third Wave***

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It is a somewhat difficult task that falls to me this evening, to discuss with you, in the series on "Charismatic Chaos," some of the matters with regard to a movement known as the "The Third Wave." I cannot, by any means, consider all of the issues, nor can I speak of all those who represent that movement. But I do want to give you some perspective so that you can be alert and aware in regard to what is happening.

Of all of the elements of the Charismatic movement, that are contemporary to us today, this one is getting the most press. Of all the questions that are asked to me by people who write and call with regard to issues facing us in the Charismatic movement, this is the most commonly discussed one. The main figure in what is known as the "Third Wave" is a man by the name of John Wimber who is pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim. He is the major figure in this movement that has come to be known as the "Third Wave of the Holy Spirit." It is sometimes called the "Signs and Wonders" movement. And this latest Charismatic tide seems to have swept across the globe in the last decade. It is literally everywhere in the English speaking parts of the world.

The term the "Third Wave" was coined by C. Peter Wagner who is a Missions professor at Fuller

Seminary and the author of several books on church growth. He is really the leading proponent of the Third Wave philosophy and methodology. According to Wagner, he said, "The First Wave was the Pentecostal Movement, the Second Wave was the Charismatic Movement, and now the Third Wave is joining them." And by that he means an inundating wave of the power of the Holy Spirit manifesting itself in visible ways. And while acknowledging the Third Wave's spiritual ancestry, that is, that it is the third of those three, Wagner nonetheless rejects the label "Charismatic and Pentecostal." In fact, most of the people in the Third Wave don't want to be identified in that way. Wagner says,

The Third Wave is a new moving of the Holy Spirit among evangelicals who for one reason or another have chosen not to identify with either the Pentecostals or the Charismatics. Its roots go back a little further but I see it as mainly a movement beginning in the 1980's and gathering momentum through the closing years of the 20th century. I see the Third Wave as distinct from, but at the same time, very similar to the first and second waves. They have to be similar because it is the same Spirit of God who is doing the work. The major variation comes in the understanding of the meaning of "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" and the role of tongues in authenticating this. I myself, for example, would rather not have people call me a Charismatic, I do not consider myself a Charismatic, I am simply an Evangelical Congregationalist who is open to the Holy Spirit working through me and my church in any way He chooses.

He refuses the label "Charismatic," not primarily because of any doctrinal distinction, but primarily because of the stigma attached to the name. It's important for me to mention that to you because if you talk to someone in the Third Wave they might endeavor to distance themselves from classic Pentecostalism or more contemporary Charismaticism, but the fact is that they are basically the Third Wave by their own admission of the very same kind of theology. It is accurate then to see the Third Wave as part of the whole Charismatic movement as we know it. While it is true that many who identify with the Third Wave will avoid using the term "Charismatic" and they'll even avoid using Charismatic jargon when writing or speaking about Spirit Baptism or other issues. Basically, the theology is the same. The terminology may change; the theology is for all intents and purposes identical. Most Third Wave teaching and preaching that I have listened to, that I have read, echoes standard Charismatic theology, and therefore in evaluating the Third Wave, we would assume that it is safe to say that the other issues that we have been discussing, that we find unbiblical in the Charismatic movement, are generally true of this movement as well, although there may be some individuals in the movement who would vary from that.

So at its very core it is an element of the Charismatic movement. At its core is an obsession with sensational experiences, a preoccupation with the "Charismata" that is, tongues, healings, prophecies, words of knowledge, visions, and ecstatic experiences, and that is, of course, where we find the indisputable link between the Third Wave and the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements. In all three movements there is a major absorption with these supernatural, sensational kind of power encounters or power displays as they like to call them. They de-emphasize what you and I would know as the traditional means of spiritual growth: prayer, Bible study, the teaching of the Word, and the fellowship of other believers. They don't intend to do that and they wouldn't do that in statement or even in print. But because of the very surpassing emphasis on the sensational experiences, those matters tend to get pushed

significantly, if not all together, into the background. Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Third Wavers, all will affirm that any Christian who is not experiencing some supernatural events, some supernatural giftedness, some kinds of healings, some kinds of prophecies, words of knowledge, or manifestations of the Spirit of God, in visible tangible ways, is really stuck at a low level of spiritual progress; is denying the full power of God and denying himself the blessing of God.

Now, while those in the Third Wave would like to distance themselves from the first and second wave, because of its excesses. The truth of the matter is, the third wave has not managed to avoid any of the excesses that are characteristic of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. In fact, there are some in the Charismatic movement who want to distance themselves from the Third Wavers because they feel that they go to excesses that even those Charismatics wouldn't go to.

A visit, for example, to the Vineyard, would reveal to you all the commotion of many people speaking in tongues at the same time. It would reveal to you intense kind of emotional experiences going on where people were falling on the floor and laying in prone positions for as long as an hour, some people with their limbs extended. It would reveal to you people giving multiple prophecies, some of them rather bizarre, and some of them with poor grammar, and yet claiming they come from the Lord. There would be likely an experience in which they would clear the floor of chairs and they would be dancing around in a completely liberated fashion in any form that they would choose to do that, with people again perhaps falling over, climbing on chairs, dancing on the top of chairs, and doing all the things that once were associated with what we used to call, "Holy Rollers." In fact, Chuck Smith, pastor of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, told one researcher, "John Wimber has absorbed every abhorrent teaching developed by the Pentecostals into his teaching."

Now, all I want you to understand is that the Third Wave people very often want to see themselves as mainline evangelical. They want to distance themselves from the Pentecostal, Charismatic excesses, and yet it seems to be true that the excesses that occurred in both the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are very characteristic of the Third Wave as well. What makes them a bit different is that they can line up some teachers and leaders that appear to have more academic credentials than has been true in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movement. That may mean, that in the future, there will be some correctives that will come to some of those excesses, which as of yet has not taken place. But despite all of their claims to the contrary, Third Wave apologists have had astonishing success in selling their movement as a non-Charismatic phenomena. Unsuspecting churches, and I think unsuspecting denominations have opened their doors and their pulpits to Third Wave teachers, I think because of their academic credentials and because they claim not to be in the line of the Charismatics, but in fact, they are.

If you look very closely at the Third Wave you will see in it the very same kind of things you see typically in the Charismatic movement. And so I want to do a little bit closer inspection, and as I said we can't by any means exhaust this in the next half hour or so as we examine it, but I will try to put you in touch with some of the issues that need to be addressed in a much more comprehensive way than I'll be able to do tonight. But I hope that I can give you enough information to set you in the right direction.

I want to just consider maybe four of the promises that the Third Wave makes that need to be inspected rather carefully. The first promise they make is that they are experiencing supernatural Signs and Wonders, and that these Signs and Wonders come at a rather proliferated rate. That is to say they are not abnormal, they are not uncommon, they are not few and far between, but rather they are normal, common, and very often come in a flurry. They believe that fantastic Signs and Wonders demonstrate the genuineness of their movement. The fact is that we cannot turn our back on it because supernatural things are happening all the time. Miraculous phenomena is at the very heart of the Third Wave credo and experience.

Third Wave people are persuaded they are having miracles, they are having visions, they are speaking in tongues, giving prophecies, predicting the future, reading peoples minds (that is, they can stand up in a meeting and tell you your home address, your mother's maiden name, your father's mother's maiden name), and all of those kinds of things that we have always associated with people like the "Amazing Crescan" (sp.) who purvey a certain kind of magic, a certain kind of con art or whatever you want to call it. But they are into these very same kind of things. In fact, it was interesting to me that one of their leaders said that the key to his really "buying into" and believing this whole thing was when one of their prophets stood up and told him, and told the whole audience, his mother's maiden name and the true first name of his father who was only known by a nickname.

And so they believe that these kind of things are happening, that there are healings; that there are resurrections from the dead, and they frankly view Christianity without those things as impotent and adulterated by the western materialistic mindset. And [they believe that] unless we can escape the western materialistic mindset and catapult ourselves into the Third World paradigm, and begin to think in terms of mystical phenomena, we are going to be locked into a very shallow kind of Christianity. Signs and Wonders also would be the key, they believe, to Third Wave evangelism. Third Wavers say that unbelievers must experience the miraculous in order to be brought to full faith. Merely preaching the gospel message, they believe, will never reach the world for Christ.

One of their leaders has said, "That we cannot evangelize the world with the simple gospel, apart from Signs and Wonders." This, in spite of the fact, that Paul, in Romans 1, says that the simple gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. But merely preaching the gospel, they believe, isn't going to do it, it'll never reach the world for Christ. Most people will not believe without seeing miracles, they say, and those who do will be inadequately converted, and therefore stunted in their spiritual growth. John Wimber, himself, cites Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, as a classic example of power encounter, where the power of God vanquishes the power of evil.

Similar Signs and Wonders, say third wave gurus are the chief means we will be using to spread the gospel. And so what they are doing is traveling all over the world endeavoring to teach the Church how to do Signs and Wonders. And you will hear them openly confess, even the leaders at the highest level and those that are kind of developing into their next generation of leaders, that they are learning how to do miracles. They are learning how to heal the sick, raise the dead, read minds, tell people their address and phone numbers, and their names of their parents. They are learning to do that, they are learning to call out healings, they are learning to read behind somebody's face and see the sin that is in them. They

are learning to do that, because that is very essential if they are going to convince the world that the message is from God.

Modern miracles workers have yet to call down fire from heaven as did Elijah, but they may be working on that as well. Third Wave officials tell of some fantastic Signs and Wonders, Wimber, for example, reported an incident where a woman's toe, which had been cut off, supposedly grew back. He described another woman in Australia whose cleft palate closed up miraculously three days after God him a "word of knowledge" that she would be healed. Wagner recounted a report from an Argentine faith healer, who's in the movement, by the name of Carlos Anacondia (sp.), who said, two particular manifestations of the Holy Spirit seem to impress unbelievers more than anything else in his crusades, "falling in the power of the Spirit" and "filling teeth." On a fairly regular basis, decayed teeth are filled and new teeth grow where there were none before. Interestingly enough, according to Anacondia, most unbeliever's teeth are filled and very few believers get their teeth filled. Now, I don't why he said that, or even why that's supposedly true, but I have another question, "Why does God fill teeth instead of just giving them new teeth as long as He is going to do it?"

But, nonetheless, whether you are talking about Wagner or Wimber, they are convinced that these miracles are happening. They are at least trying to convince us they are happening. Both of them are convinced, for example, at least from what they say, that many dead people are being raised from the dead. Many of them, not just some, not just a few, but many. And it is really difficult to resist the conclusion that these are either utter fabrications, that have just grown with the telling, or that these people are so caught in the wish that these things come to pass, that they have convinced themselves that in fact they do. In the two cases that I mentioned to you from John Wimber, he maintains that medical doctors witnessed the events, yet he offers no documentation.

And you have to ask the question somewhere along the line, "Why don't they publish proof that these events really took place?" It would seem to me that if people are being raised from the dead, at a fairly regular clip through the year, some of these people could show up somewhere and there could be some evidence. Particularly if they had been in the grave for several days like Lazarus, because somebody would have been there to see them put in the ground. And we wonder why they don't publish the proof of these things, phenomena such as digit and limb replacement, the healing of birth defects, supernatural dentistry, and raising the dead. It seems to me that it would be rather easy to document. It would certainly help bring about the kind of world wide response the Third Wave people say they are hoping to have.

To borrow from one of them, you can only imagine if they could take four quadriplegics and instantly heal them of their quadriplegia. Four who were well known by many and been known for years to be in that condition, and they could step out of the wheel chair and be absolutely 100% whole. It wouldn't seem too difficult a thing to present the evidence for that. And it would seem to me to be quite a powerful statement.

But a pattern has begun to emerge from the Third Wave literature, and that is this, the truly spectacular miracles always seem to involve nameless people. Real people's miracles tend to be mundane and hard to

prove: cures involving back pain, inner healings, migraine relief, emotional deliverance, ringing in the ears, maybe some internal problem that is stated but not verified. The only time you get a detailed, step-by-step, carefully laid out description of a healing situation is an occasion when the healing doesn't happen. You hear rather oblique references to the healing that did happen, and rather detailed descriptions of the ones that don't.

A prime example is Wagner's account of his friend Tom Brewster, a paraplegic, who believed in healing. Brewster was so hopeful that God would heal him that he even distributed a "Declaration of Expectation" to his friends--an expression of his faith that he would one day walk. That faith never wavered, Wagner says, though it had been almost thirty years since a diving accident left him confined to a wheel chair. But the miracle never came. Brewster died after unsuccessful bladder surgery. It's difficult to read that account without noting how markedly it contrasts with the many supposed miracles that these Third Wave people account. The most dramatic miracles come with only sketchy details and are almost nearly always anonymous. Rarely do they ever involve people who are known personally to those who report the miracles. You understand that? They are not first hand. And whenever you hear the story told about the first hand it seems to have a sad ending.

Perhaps the most significant man in the life of John Wimber was a British Anglican who died of cancer, much to the great dismay and concern and sorrow of John. A group of five medical doctors, Christians, attended a recent conference the Third Wave had. These men were hoping to establish the truth of the claims that miraculous healings were taking place. One of them, Doctor Philip Seldon (sp.) reported,

The fact that John Wimber knew we were present and observing may have served to tone down the claims which we understand were made at previous conferences. Mr. Wimber, himself, referred to bad backs and indicated that people could expect pain relief but no change which could be documented by a doctor. He admitted that he had never seen a degenerated vertebrae restored to normal shape. And as I suspected, most of the conditions which were prayed over were in the psychosomatic, trivial, or medically difficult to document categories. Problems with left great toe, nervous disorder, breathing problems, barrenness, unequal leg lengths, bad backs and neck.

The doctor concluded, "At this stage we are unaware of any organic healings which could be proven."

Now, what explanation is given for people who are not healed, because we know that many people must go there who have real problems. Right? I mean, if you hear that miracles are being done and you are looking for that to happen in your life--you are going to go. And people do not get healed--obviously. The reasons given are: some people don't have faith in God for healing; another reason, personal unconfessed sin creates a barrier to God's healing power; another one they say is persistent and widespread disunity, sin, and unbelief in bodies of believers and families, inhibits healings in individual members of the body.

In other words, they will say, one, "You don't have enough faith to be healed. Your lack of faith is hindering God." Or they will say, "You have unconfessed sin in your life and you put a barrier between

you and God." Or they will say, "You are going to a church that doesn't believe in healings so you are not going to get healed as long as you are in that environment." Or they will say, "Because of incomplete or incorrect diagnosis of what is causing your problem, you do not know how to pray correctly, and if you don't know what your problem is you can't pray correctly to get it fixed, it won't get fixed, or it might not." "And some people," they say further, don't get healed because they assume that God always heals instantly, and when they don't get instantly healed they stop praying, so they don't get healed.

Oddly enough, John Wimber, himself, said, "I never blame the sick person for lack of faith if healing doesn't come." That's a contradictory statement. And eventually he is still trying to piece together the theology of this. He struggles, because he said also, "I have a continually expanding group of disgruntled people who have come for healing and don't get it."

Now, the reality is, with the Third Wave, with all of its emphasis on signs and wonders, it has produced nothing really verifiable that qualifies in the New Testament sense as an authentic sign or wonder, at least nothing that they have made available. Jesus' miracles must, after all, be the standard by which we make an evaluation. Right? No one before Jesus or since has performed as many signs and wonders as He did during His earthly ministry. His miracles were strikingly different from those produced by the modern signs and wonders movement. None involved psychosomatic infirmities, all were visible and verifiable, they were, in short, true signs and wonders.

We learned some other things about the miracles from our Lord's ministry, chiefly that miracles do not necessarily produce faith in an unbelieving heart. Let me say that again, they do not necessarily produce faith in an unbelieving heart. I don't want to say that there aren't times when God can use or has used the miraculous to produce or to assist in producing faith. Faith is a gift from God but it is possible that a miracle has been a component in God bringing about that faith. But that is not necessarily what happens, and that certainly cannot be guaranteed to happen. In fact, in the Gospel of John, Jesus did many signs and many wonders. In fact, He proliferated that entire nation of Palestine with signs and wonders. And the people were able to see them and even to participate in them, such as in the feeding of the Great Multitude.

The net effect of all of that tremendous, tremendous, miracle working enterprise could be summed up in the words of John 12:37, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him." There is no guarantee that because there are miracles there will be saving faith. It is true that as I said, God may use miracles to bring about faith. In Acts 9, you might want to look at it for a moment; in Acts, chapter 9, in verse 32, "Peter was traveling through all those parts," writes Luke. "He came down to the saints who lived at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. And peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise, and make your bed.' And immediately he arose. And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord."

If you were to read into the next section, in Joppa, there was a woman there named Tabitha (or Dorcas). She died and Peter was used to bring her back to life. And in verse 42 it says, "And it became known all

over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." We don't want to say categorically, that there would never be a time when God wouldn't cause some miraculous act to be a component in the producing of faith. But that seems to be the minority effect. The majority seem not to have such a response. In spite of all of Jesus' miracles, raising the dead, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, having authority over demons, the people rejected Him, the people crucified Him, and at the time of His death there were only about 120 followers gathered in the Upper Room, and that after several years of miraculous acts.

The gospels contain numerous examples of people who witnessed Jesus' signs, who witnessed His wonders, and yet remained in utter unbelief. He rebuked the cities where He performed most of His miracles: He rebuked Korazim, Bethsaida, He rebuked Capernaum, because they didn't repent, and because they had seen so many miracles. And He even says that they were even worse off than Sodom and Gomorrah, because Sodom and Gomorrah, as bad as it was, would have repented if it had seen as much as they had seen. John 2:23 tells us that, "Many believed in His name, because they saw the signs," yet that kind of belief was not a saving belief. Jesus didn't consider them true believers, according to verse 24.

In John, chapter 6, verse 2, the record says that, "A great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick." And yet, in verse 66, when He began to teach them, and He began to speak about the spiritual issues that confronted them, it says, many of the same crowd "withdrew, and were not walking with Him any more." So there are times when, whatever kind of believing they did, was not believing unto salvation. In John, chapter 11, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, a monumental miracle. Absolutely monumental! Even His enemies couldn't deny it, according to John 11:47. But far from believing in Jesus, that simply accelerated their desire to plot His death.

Things really weren't much different than that in the Book of Acts, in the early Church. In Acts 3, Peter and John healed a man who had been lame from birth and again the Jewish religious leaders didn't deny the miracle had occurred, according to Acts 4:16. They couldn't deny it, but their response was far from saving faith. They ordered the Apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. Go back into the Old Testament and you can examine the record of Old Testament signs and wonders, they didn't produce saving faith either. Pharaoh's heart was hardened despite the powerful signs and wonders God did through Moses. The entire generation of Israelites who witnessed those same miracles, died in unbelief in the wilderness. It didn't seem to lead them to any great spiritual level of devotion.

Despite all the miracles performed during the time of Elijah and Elisha, and those times when God acted miraculously at other seasons, both Israel and Judah failed to repent and were ultimately carried away into captivity. In fact, the very account that John Wimber cites as Biblical justification for power encounters, Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal, is an example. The revival produced out of that amazing act by which God sent fire from heaven and burned up stones and water, the amazing, amazing miracle produced a very short lived response, and within a few days Elijah was hiding for fear of his life, and Baal worship continued until God finally judged Israel.

Now, that is not to say that signs and wonders were not important when God used them. It is not to say that they never were used by God to be a part of the production of faith. But that was not the normal result. They often attracted people's attention so the gospel message could be [preached], and people hearing that message were saved. But, miracles and signs and wonders, in themselves, do not produce saving faith. And so when they say they promise "signs and wonders" it's questionable whether the "signs and wonders" are really legitimate, and it's questionable whether the "signs and wonders" are necessary for producing saving faith, since that is not their purpose in the Scripture generally.

Secondly, they make the promise of "Powerful Evangelism," "Power Evangelism." What they are really doing (and this follows the first point) is being powerful in terms of turning people to God. My conviction on this, however, is that what they say is "Powerful Evangelism" lacks, very often, the very necessary element of evangelism which is a clear proclamation of gospel truth. The saving message gets badly corrupted and sometimes even omitted. Third Wave books and Third Wave testimonies are filled with anecdotes about people who supposedly became Christians on the basis of some miracle they saw; some supernatural wonder they saw, with little or no mention of the gospel having been proclaimed to them.

In fact, in the book, *Power Evangelism*, which was John Wimber's main book and sort of set this thing in motion (it's the main textbook on evangelism), there is no reference in that whole book to the cross of Christ or the doctrine of the atonement. I understand, now, that some are endeavoring to instruct him in that matter so that he can understand that, and that there is a revision of that book coming out which will delineate a clear doctrine of the atonement and the true gospel. But, up until now it hasn't seemed to be necessary for the expansion and explosion of the movement. Soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation, an accurate gospel message, can hardly be considered as a major thrust of this movement. In all the fuss about the signs and wonders, the content of the gospel seems to have been given second place.

One report goes like this,

A serious consideration by observers in one of the seminars, was that there was no gospel in the so-called evangelistic meeting. The cross of Jesus was not central, the atonement was not explained, and mankind's need and the provision of redemption not even cursorily treated. Believing himself to be following the example of Jesus and the Apostles, John Wimber called out for those who needed to be healed: bad backs, short legs, neck pain, and a whole host of diseases. People were asked to stand and team members dispatched to pray for them while on the stage John demanded that the Spirit come, and after a few minutes of silence several screams were heard and people sobbing. A little later it was declared that people had been healed and God had given a token as a sign to those who did not believe. In short, they were asked to base their decision on what they had seen, or rather the interpretation of what they had seen, and the sacrifice for sin through Christ didn't even get a mention. I left wondering what faith people would have been converted to that night? It didn't seem to resemble New Testament Christianity.

Now, I realize that this may be but the observation of one individual, but it seems as though in reading the material, this is a somewhat common thread. Peter Wagner says that he marvels that Argentine

evangelist, Omar Cabrera (sp.) has people saved and healed before he starts preaching. It's a question to me, how can you get saved before you hear the message? But [it is] not a question that seems to bother some of them. Most of the Third Wavers believe that miracles are more effective than the gospel message preached, that preaching is limited, and I shared some of that with you a few weeks ago. That somehow preaching is a very poor way to get people to come to Christ, the least of all ways desirable. Wagner further writes,

Christianity began with 120 in the Upper Room, within three centuries it had become the predominant religion of the Roman Empire. What brought this about? The answer is deceptively simple, while Christianity was being presented to unbelievers in both Word and deed, it was the deed that far exceeded the Word in evangelistic effectiveness.

That's a remarkable statement: "That the deed is more powerful than the Word," seems to me to "fly in the face" of Hebrews 4, which says that, "The Word is sharper than any two-edged sword, and is able to pierce to depths that nothing else can pierce." The Anglican, Michael Harper says, "Miracles help people believe." The question is, "Believe what?" Is the gospel being clearly, carefully delineated? In fact, it has been said that those of us who don't do signs and wonders, and perform miracles, are doing what they call "Programmatic Evangelism," instead of "Power Evangelism." It is insipid, it is powerless, vapid, kind of evangelism. What is needed is "Power Evangelism," supernatural encounters. Those are the things that bring people to Christ.

Two fallacies, at least, lurk in that kind of thinking; both render it utterly ineffective in winning people to genuine faith in Christ. When modern miracles become the basis for an evangelistic invitation, the real message of the gospel somehow becomes incidental. And you would have to be in a meeting where you would see the "swept away attitude" of people who are so deeply lost in an emotional experience, and this may not always be the case, but often the case, that a clear message might not come through. There is often a mystical, ethereal Jesus who replaces the historical, Biblical one. And the focus of faith becomes faith in the miraculous, rather than faith in the Savior Himself. Those who put their trust in modern miracles are not saved by that faith no matter how earnestly they may believe they are. You are only saved by putting your faith in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Power Evangelism seems to me to be an unbiblical concept. "Faith comes from hearing," doesn't it? "And hearing the Word of Christ." It is the gospel, not signs and wonders, that is the power of God unto salvation. And do you not remember what Luke 16:31 says, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though someone rises . . ." what? "From the dead." Despite the many signs and wonders that Jesus performed, Jesus didn't practice that kind of Power Evangelism. In fact, He repeatedly rebuked those who demanded signs, (Matthew 12, 16; Mark 8; Luke 11, 23; John 4). He rebuked the "signs seekers."

The emphasis of Jesus' ministry was not miracles but preaching. He often preached without doing signs, without doing wonders. And then in Mark 1:29-34, we read that Jesus did many miraculous healings in Galilee. Verse 37, tells us that Peter and the others found Him the next morning and excitedly said,

"Everybody is looking for you. They want to see more of this. They want to see more signs and more wonders." And Jesus said this, (Mark 1:38) "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, in order that I may preach there also; for that is what I came out for." He came to preach, therein lies the power. Preaching the Word was more important than the Signs and Wonders, and I believe the Third Wave is advocating a different approach and is out of balance with the Bible in that regard.

Well, there is more to say. Just briefly, let me share two thoughts with you. They also promise a Biblical orientation, but I am very much afraid of the fact, and by their own admission, that they have many errors in their theology. And as I spoke to several of them this week, I asked the question, "If God is giving Signs and Wonders, is it to authenticate His message?" Which the answer has to be yes. "Then would you explain to me why the people who claim to be doing the Signs and Wonders are the ones who have an errant theology? Why would God be authenticating error?" It would seem to me that if God was going to give somebody the ability to do Signs and Wonders, thus to draw people to His message, He would give such a gift and ability to one who was most capable of articulating accurately the proper message. And by their own admission they realize that there are many theological inaccuracies, Biblical inaccuracies, in the movement, and that poses the unanswerable query as to, "Why in the world would God want to be using miracles to authenticate those who, as of yet, don't even have their theology straighten out?" John Wimber would be the first to admit that they are still accumulating a theology. He made the statement that, "We are drawing together our experiences so that we can frame up a theology." And it seems odd to think that God would be vindicating such and authenticating such.

Furthermore, they are committed to the fact that the Bible is not enough, that there must be further communication from God. One of their leaders says that, To believe that the Scripture is the end of God's revelation is a demonic doctrine. In order to fulfill God's highest purpose for our lives, we must be able to hear His voice both in the written word and the word freshly spoken from heaven. Satan understands the strategic importance of Christians hearing God's Word, so he has launched various attacks against us in this area. Ultimately, this doctrine, that is, believing that the Scripture is the end of revelation, is demonic, even though Christian theologians have been used to perfect it. So Christian theologians who have perfected the idea that the Scripture is the end of God's revelation, have perfected a demonic doctrine, because God is still speaking. And there is a great thirst for new revelation, that I believe imposes upon the movement a low view of Scripture's sufficiency.

Well, let me just give you a final note. There is much more to say about that, you can read it in my book [Charismatic Chaos] when it gets here in a few months. There is just one other thing to note, and so much more that I would like to say. They claim also an evangelical heritage, they claim also an evangelical heritage. If you listen to them, you would believe that they are in the mainstream of evangelicalism, that they are committed to a traditional, Biblical theology. And yet that is not true. Statements of faith and creeds are just not a part of that movement. John Wimber's Vineyard is typical, I am quoting from one writer,

Another disturbing aspect of the Vineyard's ministry is their lack of any written statement of faith. Because Vineyard members come from a variety of denominational backgrounds, the leadership has avoided setting strong doctrinal standards. This de-emphasis of doctrine is also consistent with the

leadership, whose backgrounds, theologically include association with the Quakers, who typically stress the inner experience of God and minimize the need for doctrinal expressions of one's understanding of God.

That's from the Christian Research Institute. There is no way that they can connect up with historic, traditional, evangelical, orthodox theology, because they don't codify doctrine. They don't develop creeds and theological statements, so how do they know where they stand? And yet in spite of that, they want to position their movement in the mainstream of historic evangelicalism. They want to emphasize conservative, even fundamentalist roots, but that does not bear out under examination. The movement is broadly ecumenical and cencredic. There is an evangelical veneer but the wide embracing of all kinds of experiences. Now, it is possible that this could change. There maybe some winds of change, there may be some doctrinal direction and structure coming, but at the present time this is true. To reinforce that, may I say, Wimber is as comfortable with Roman Catholic dogma as he is with evangelicalism. He himself defends the Catholic claims of healings through relics. He advocates a reunification of Protestants and Catholics. A former associate said,

During a Vineyard Pastors Conference, he went so far as to apologize to the Catholic Church on behalf of all Protestants. In his seminar on Church Planting, he said, the Pope, who by the way is very responsive to the Charismatic movement and is himself a "Born Again" evangelical, is preaching the gospel as clear as anyone in the world today.

You can see that there is some confusion. In their book on Power Evangelism, he gives a catalog of individuals and movements. When he wants to seek to establish Signs and Wonders, he reaches back and He identifies himself with a whole list of people, Helleron (sp.), a fourth century hermit, Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, Francis of Assisi, the Waldenses who opposed the Pope and were persecuted by the Dominicans, Vincent Ferrera (sp.) who was himself was a Dominican, Martin Luther, Ignatius of Loyola, John Wesley, and the Jansenists, a Catholic sect. It's a hodgpoge of all kinds of things. In a booklet published by the Vineyard, he adds the Shakers. They were a cult that demanded celibacy and thus went out of existence for obvious reasons. He puts himself in line with Edward Irving, a discredited leader of the Irvingnite sect in 19th century England. He also identifies himself with the supposed healings and miracles worked by an apprition of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. So you can see that the heritage is not at all evangelical, but quite confused. Even Wagner wants to link himself with contemporary, positive, possibility thinking as well as with the Fourth Demensional thinking of Korean Pastor Paul Yongee Chow (sp.). It's a hodgpog of many, many things.

All of this to say we need to be alert. We need to be aware. We need to test all these things by the Word of God. My only hope and prayer for these people is that someone may come to them, someone who can lead them to a proper understanding of the truth, pulling them away from this tremendous preoccupation and domination that comes to them from experiences. Experiences can be so deadly because they cannot always be certain that they come from God.

Well, much more to be said. I guess what I can say in conclusion is, "Don't be swept away by the Third

Wave." And remember this, the only true test of whether a person or a movement is from God is not Signs and Wonders. A true test is, teaching in conformity to this Book. And the highest expression of God's power in the world today is not some spectacular, unusual Sign or Wonder. The highest expression of God's power in the world today is the transformation of a soul from darkness to light, from death to life. And equally wonderous is the tranquil godliness of a Spirit controlled believer.

Let me just say this in closing, I don't believe for one moment that we have ministered here at Grace Church for 22 years without the Holy Spirit. And I don't believe for one moment that we have never known the Power of God. I shared with these gentlemen, with whom I spoke on Friday, that we see the power of God, again and again. We saw it tonight, didn't we, when we heard the testimonies, week in and week out. I see it in the transformation of your life. I see it in the transformations of your marriage. For the last several weeks I have been praying for a marriage in our church. It was coming apart at the seams, really sad, grieving. And I saw, apart from anything that I did, apart from any intervention by me--God put that marriage together in a glorious way. We've seen that again and again. I talked to a mother and a father who had prayed for a wayward son and God brought that son back to the point where that son embraced Christ and embraced his family in Christ.

I don't for one moment search because I have never known the power of God in this ministry, and I just affirm that, not for my own sake, not to bring credit to me, but that no one would discredit what Christ has done here and what His spirit has accomplished. Nothing that happens in the supernatural dimension happens because of me or you, that's out of our league. But I will not yield to any who would assume that what we have experienced here is a cheap version of the real power. Many of you have come to faith in Christ here. Many of you have grown in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and been used of God in many ways in spiritual service, the benefits of your own spiritual growth and maturity, because of the ministries here. Many have gone out of this place and conducted powerful ministries all over the world, and they go on even today. And I guess, all of that to say, to be real honest with you, I am not looking for anything, because I have already in my life lived through Ephesians 3:20, and I've seen God do, "exceedingly, abundantly, above all I could ask or think." And to be honest with you, my faith is strong enough to accept that this is the evidence of the power of God and I don't have to have more proof. Some people say they have the faith for all of that, but I think they have doubt looking for proof--very often. And I want to affirm tonight my gratitude to God and to the Holy Spirit, and to the Lord Jesus Christ for what They have accomplished in this place, and what They have accomplished through the teaching of the Word and the faithful ministry that God has given to this church, here and around the world. And I want to give God all the glory for all of it, and I want to acknowledge along with you that He has done it, and we have never ministered for a moment feeling that He wasn't here in the fullness of His power accomplishing His work for His own glory. And He has done it in an orderly way without chaos and without confusion, and we praise Him for that.

Father, thank you for our time tonight to consider these things. Help us Lord to be able to evaluate everything by the Word. We know that in this movement there are some who, of course, are our brothers and sisters, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and we would pray for them, that your Spirit might lead them to bring Biblical direction where they are able to this movement. To confront its errors and excesses. We pray Lord too that no one would be led astray and led away from the simplicity that is in Christ and into

chaos and confusion of emotional experience, and find it to be a substitute for true regeneration. Father, we pray too that you would allow us with grace and love to speak to folks who perhaps are in these kinds of groups and to bring them the help that your Word and your Spirit would want them to have. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-58, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 7. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 7, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 7**

### ***How do Spiritual Gifts Operate?***

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As a preface to our study tonight, I want to just mention to you that we are going through this study on the Charismatic movement, its contemporary form. And I am unable in this particular study to cover every relevant passage of Scripture, and so I would just encourage you that you will find a series of tapes on all of the relevant passages that I have already preached on in years past, out of the Book of Acts, out of 1 Corinthians, which are the primary ones. You will also find in the bookstore and the tape room, a study guide of about 300 pages on the issue of spiritual gifts; in some great detail I cover that. I also have written a book on Tongues, and speaking in Tongues, and all that is involved in that. And then we have the commentary on 1 Corinthians, which is a verse by verse discussion of those passages, and particularly focusing on chapters 12 through 14 that deal with Spiritual Gifts. So there are some supplemental materials that would be very helpful for you in filling out your understanding of this subject. What I am endeavoring to do in this series is not go through every single passage in great detail, but to take a kind of overall look at the contemporary Charismatic movement and compare it with what we know to be true out of the Word of God. We are looking at it more from the doctrinal side than we are from the expositional side.

Now, I want you to turn in your Bible tonight, to a passage of Scripture that I think sets a good context for what I want to say. Matthew, chapter 7, and I want to begin reading in verse 15, and just read down a

little ways, and I think that you will catch the flow of what we find here. Jesus, here, is bringing the Sermon on the Mount to its conclusion, and in so doing, this is what He says, beginning in Matthew 7, and verse 15, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." By the way, sheep's clothing is wool and it was the garment of the prophet. The prophet wore wool and so they are coming, not as false sheep, but as false shepherds,

"You will know them by their fruits" (verse 16). "Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

What Jesus is saying is, "Don't listen just to what they say; look at the character of their life--the product." And then He says, in verse 21,

"Not everyone," and still in the context of false teachers, "who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

An amazing passage, warning us about false teachers. These particular false teachers appear to say the right thing--they speak about the Lord. "Lord, Lord," they say. They even seem to do the right things--they prophesy or preach in "The name of the Lord." "In the name of the Lord," they cast out demons. "In the name of the Lord," they perform many miracles. But they don't know the Lord, and the Lord does not know them, and we are to be aware of that reality.

So as we come to any examination of the Charismatic movement that takes us into looking at the phenomena of the movement, we have to be very aware of the fact that Jesus warned us already that even though they speak in the Lord's name, and even though they cast out demons in the Lord's name, and even though they do miracles and claim to do them in the Lord's name, they may be false. They may say all of the right things but you have to look at the fruit of their lives; you have to compare them with the divine standard of good fruit.

This examination and this test must be held up in the issues of spiritual gifts. As we look at these people who say they are prophesying in Jesus' name, and casting out demons and doing miracles, we want to be sure of two things: one, that their lives back it up, and two, that what they do is consistent with the Word of God.

So I want to help you to evaluate that, if I can, tonight. And I want to refer to some of the more well known of these Charismatic leaders today because they're so very public, and they represent the kind of thing that is going on that has to be tested.

In Orlando, there is a preacher in the Orlando Christian Center, named Benny Hinn. Benny Hinn slays people in the Spirit. When Hinn feels the anointing come upon his hand, he touches his followers on the forehead, or simply waves an arm at them, and they fall down in a faint. If you've ever seen him on television, then you have witnessed that. He has a nationally aired television broadcast in which people are slain in the Spirit nearly every week. In fact, the other night I was watching him and he slew everybody in the entire auditorium--one section at a time. He waved his hand over this section and they all fell down, and then he waved his hand over this section and they all fell down, and he waved his hand over that section and they all fell down, and then he waved his hand over the balcony and they all fell down.

And the question comes to mind, of course, "Is Benny Hinn's ability a unique spiritual gift? Is this God? Is God knocking all these people down? Or is he simply using the techniques of mesmerism and the power of suggestion? In fact, isn't it fair to say that he may even be using demonic power?" Surely in the light of the warnings of Scripture (Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22, 2 Thess 2:7-9), demon inspired people are going to do "lying wonders." And so that possibility must not be ruled out.

One thing is certain, Benny Hinn or anyone else who knocks people over, is doing something that is never described, never discussed in the Bible. Nothing like it is listed in any list of spiritual gifts, and no apostle, and no early church leader ever did anything like that. The Charismatic practice of slaying people in the Spirit, yet, has become so commonplace that many Charismatics may be surprised to learn that Scripture is utterly silent about such a gift. There is no record that anybody ever did that. The only time anybody ever fell over was when Jesus spoke in the Garden when the soldiers came to arrest Him. Yet the practice typifies the Charismatic movement's obsession with some kind of strange and bizarre phenomena. There is no indication that in the early church anybody had the power to knock people in to some kind of spirit-filled catalepsy.

But there is a preoccupation today with the paranormal, the same fascination, I think, that leads people to reading avariciously [greedily] as they do the books of Stephen King and others like him. From the earliest days of Pentecostalism the quest for more unusual and more spectacular manifestation of spiritual gifts, has in effect, sabotaged rational thinking so that you have people that are turning away from what is reasonable and rational. And, as I have noted throughout the series, reports of inexplicable things, even unbelievable things, mystical phenomena, are just rampant in the Charismatic and Pentecostal tradition. And it doesn't matter what it is; no tale seems too bizarre, too fantastic, too far out, to get a following. Peter Masters and John Witcomb (sp.) have written a book called, "The Charismatic Phenomena," and in it there is a quote that might be worth your listening too,

There is no doubt that Charismatic teaching results in a considerable lowering of the credulity threshold of all its adherence. The practice of tongues, the relegation of the understanding to a minor place, the diet of miracles, and the extreme subjectivity of Charismatic thinking, all combine to produce this effect, quickly and inevitably. Once people have been mentally conditioned by a Charismatic environment, they are able to take seriously such amazing ideas as Oral Roberts claim to have seen a vision of Jesus 900 feet tall! Charismatic practices loosen up the mind in such an unhealthy way that people will believe almost anything.

You see, once you disconnect people from rational thinking, they are fair game. In fact, many appear to believe that God's power can be displayed only in ways that are irrational, unearthly, eerie, and somewhat preposterous. Some Charismatics disdain logic, as we have noted, disdain reason, disdain common sense in an eagerness to embrace these kind of things. Worse, the entire Charismatic movement has absorbed the erroneous notion that whatever is truly spiritual, whatever is truly of the Spirit must somehow transcend or bypass a person's rational senses. They would, for the most part want us to believe that anything that is rational, sensible, reasonable, is not supernatural. Spiritual gifts supposedly operate by somehow suspending the faculties of human reason. And you would think that the strongest evidence of the Holy Spirit's working is when everybody goes into a stupor! And then you are really seeing the power. When everybody falls over in some kind of stupor, you are really seeing God at work. And so the lore of the Charismatic movement is filled with outrageous accounts of behavior that resembles trances, seizures, subliminal messaging, hypnosis, suspended animation, frenzy, hysteria, and even dementia. And these are often cited as evidences of the power of God. Churches where people think reasonably and rationally, sensibly, discern with their minds the things of God--"Do not know," they say, "the power of God."

Kenneth Hagan, another very popular leader in the movement, for example, claims that one night while he was preaching, a cloud of glory enveloped him, and he lost track of where he was and what he was saying,

I didn't know one word that I had said for 15 minutes. I had been the "Glory Cloud." When I found myself walking around the altar, I got so embarrassed. My face got red and I ran back on the platform, got behind the pulpit, and said, "Amen, let's pray" and gave the invitation. Sometimes when I am preaching (Hagan writes) the Spirit of God comes on me, arrests my attention, and I can't say a word in English. He goes on to tell an incident when he was ministering with Fred Price, who is down here in the Crenshaw area, and he said he was struck with what he believed was an anointing in the church service. Hagan said that he was unable to communicate in English for hours.

Now, the point is that this is to evidence the real power of God, when you completely out of touch with reality! In a similar vein, Hagan relates this story, and I am quoting from his writing,

Sister Maria Woodworth Edder (sp.) was an evangelist during the early days of the Pentecostal movement in this country. I read the newspaper account of what happened in Saint Louis sometimes before 1920. She was in her 70's preaching in a tent which was full, when right in the middle of her sermon, with her hand up uplifted to illustrate a point and her mouth opened, the power of God came upon her. She froze in that position and stood like a statue for three days and for three nights. Think about that, all of her body had to be under the control of the Spirit of God! She had no bodily functions for three days and nights. She stood there! According to the newspaper account, it was estimated that more than 150,000 people came by to see her in the three day period. The third night the Spirit of God released her. She thought it was the same night and the same sermon and she went on preaching at the same place in her sermon.

It completely escapes me, why anyone would assume that such behavior manifests God's power! Nothing remotely like it can be found in Scripture, except Lot's wife. Still, whatever sermon she was preaching she never completed. Still, Hagan tries to eclipse that tale with even more bizarre ones, he says,

One night a sixteen year old girl was filled with the Spirit, spoke with other tongues, went into a spirit of intercession, then with her hands raised, stood in one spot for eight hours and forty minutes. She never batted an eye, never shifted her weight from foot to foot. It was January and she was standing away from the stove. Her mother, concerned about her getting cold, asked it if would be all right to move her nearer to the stove, which was in the center of the room. "I don't know," I said, "I have never seen anything like it." The pastor who weighed 250 pounds said, "Brother Hagan, you get under one of her elbows and I will get under the other and we will scoot her closer to the heat." But she couldn't be moved--it was as if she was nailed to the floor!

On another night, when we gave the altar call, I sensed the power of God was upon one of the women. She began exhorting people to be saved. I said, "Sister, go ahead and obey God." With her eyes closed she stepped upon the wide altar and began walking from one end to the other, exhorting sinners to be saved. She would walk right up to the end of the altar and you would think that she was going to step off! But, each time she would turn. Folks started coming to the altar, her eyes were shut, but every time one would come her spirit would know it and she would dance a little jig for joy. Then she would go right back to exhorting. When the twentieth person had come, (every single sinner was saved that night, God is my witness, my wife is my witness, and each person in that building is my witness) she began to dance right off of the end of the altar! She stood in midair dancing! Her feet were not touching the floor, everyone saw it, I could have reached out and touched her, then she turned and danced back on to the altar, down the altar to the other end and stopped, opened her eyes and stepped off.

Frankly, that seems like a scene from a bad horror movie, more than [it does] a true miracle. Levitation, altered states, feet nailed to the floor! That is the apparatus of the Occult--not genuine spiritual gifts. You say, "Well, you have chosen some isolated and atypical examples." Not so! And it is not just provincial and old fashioned Charismatics who report such spectacles. Virtually every major segment of the Charismatic movement feature stories like those. Even the newest, the Third Wave movement, which we discussed some last Sunday night, despite strong ties to the academic community, exhibits a definite bias towards signs and wonders in which human intellect is disengaged. Carol Wimber describes the watershed experience that launched her husband's church into power evangelism (her husband being John Wimber),

It was Sunday evening, Mother's Day 1981, and a young man whom John had invited to preach, gave his testimony. At the end of his message, the guest speaker invited all those under the age of 25 to come forward. None of us had a clue as to what was going to happen next. When we got to the front the speaker said, "For years now the Holy Spirit has been grieved by the Church, but He is getting over it. Come Holy Spirit!" And He came. Most of these young people had grown up around our home and we knew them well. We had four children between the ages of 18 and 24. One fellow, Tim, started bouncing! His arms flung out and he fell over, but one of his hands accidentally hit a mike stand and he

took it down with him. He was tangled up in the cord with the mike next to his mouth. Then he began speaking in tongues, so the sound went throughout the gymnasium. We had never considered ourselves Charismatics and certainly never placed any emphasis on the gift of tongues. We had seen a few people tremble and fall over before and we had seen many healings, but this was different. The majority of the young people were shaking and falling over. At one point it looked like a battlefield; bodies everywhere, people weeping, wailing, speaking in tongues, much shouting and loud behavior. And there was Tim in the middle of it all--babbling into the microphone!

Can you tell me that, that kind of chaos is to be accepted as proof that God is at work? Even John Wimber at first seemed uncertain: "He spent all night reading Scripture and historical accounts of revivals," Mrs. Wimber reports, "He was afraid of doing anything that wasn't explicitly outlined in the Bible." That's a healthy fear. But apparently that all night study didn't yield him any conclusive answers, and so Mrs. Wimber goes on,

By 5:00am John was desperate. He cried out to God, "Lord, if this is You please tell me." A moment later, the phone rang and a pastor friend of ours from Denver, Colorado, was on the line. "John," he said, "I am sorry I am calling so early but I have really something strange to tell you. I don't know what it means but God wants me to say, 'It's me John!'" That was all John needed. He didn't have to understand the trembling, or why everything happened as it did, all he needed to know was that the Holy Spirit did it.

And how did he know the Holy Spirit did it? He got a phone call from Denver. That's how he knew. If John Wimber had continued reading Scripture he might have come to 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, and he might have seen the Apostle Paul reprove the Corinthian Church for just such a scene. In verses 23 and 40 of 1 Corinthians chapter 14, it says, "If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner." And of course, you don't determine God's will by a phone call from anywhere. God's Word is the only reliable test of such things, and it seems clear that an honest reading of Scripture would have given the plain answer. How can you take counsel from an unexpected telephone call? But that's the mystical again. It must be God, because it seems so extraordinary. I guess John Wimber decided that he didn't need to make sense of what was happening in the church. He didn't need to reconcile it with Scripture. He didn't need to understand it, he only needed a phone call. He had a mystical sign and that was enough, so he put aside his fear about extrabiblical phenomena, deciding and opting out, for the proof of a phone call.

Now, these are simply illustrations of what goes on in the movement. The Charismatic tendency to suspend the intellect and let mysticism run amuck is the essence of what Paul wrote against in 1 Corinthians 14. There Paul condemns primarily the misuse of the gift of tongues, but he also has other things in mind as well. And he was bringing order to the very chaos which has come back to the Church. And yet it is so true, that in the modern Charismatic movement, chaos and confusion are typical, very typical.

Several of our elders from Grace Church attended the Vineyard, a few weeks ago, to see this very kind of chaos. People lying on the floor prostrate for a prolonged period of time with all their limbs sticking out, as if they were in a catatonic state. People babbling in tongues and being incited to do that by the leader. People pushing chairs off the floor and dancing all over the floor and jumping up and down on the chairs. The same kind of hysteria.

Norval Hayes (sp.) describes an incident when he supposedly healed a man of deafness,

The man fell straight forward, face down on the floor. You would have thought all of his teeth would have been knocked out, but they weren't. Then he bounced and fell back down again. The impact could have broken his nose but it didn't. Again he bounced up off the floor and fell back again. This time he laid there real quiet for 60 seconds, then his mouth opened and a little squeaky sound like a mouse began to come out. It got louder, sounding like a big rat, and finally sounded like a screaming hyena. In a little while the man shook his head and pushed himself up off of the floor. He acted as if he had been hit in the head with a stick, but both ears had popped opened and the knot in his stomach was gone. People jumped out of their seats and started running towards me and saying, "Pray for me." As I reached out and began to pray, it was as though the wind of God had come into my hands. People were lying all around on the floor, including denomination pastors. God baptized them in the Holy Ghost and the moment they hit the floor they started to speak in tongues.

Kenneth Hagan tells us of incredible tales about unusual healings that he has done when peculiar anointings have been manifest in his ministry,

Several times the anointing has come on me to do unusual things while praying for the sick. Sometimes I go along 5 or 6 years between times. The first time it happened to me was in 1950. I was preaching in Oklahoma, a woman came forward for prayer, she said she was 72, she looked like she was about to give birth to a baby, of course, she had a tumor. I started to lay hands on her to pray, when the Word of the Lord came to me saying, "Hit her in the stomach with your fist!" On the inside of me I said, "Lord, you're going to get me in trouble, going around hitting women in the stomach with my fist. I don't believe I much want to do that." "Well, if you want argue about it, the anointing will leave you. It will lift from you just like a bird flying away after sitting on your shoulder." It left me.

When it left me, I thought, "Well, I will go ahead and minister with laying on of hands." I laid hands on her again and the anointing came again, and the Word of the Lord came and said, "Hit her in the stomach with your fist!" I decided I better stop and explain that to the crowd before I started doing it. So I told them what the Lord said and I punched her in the stomach with my fist, and God and hundreds of people are my witnesses that that stomach went down like you'd stuck a pin in a balloon.

Hagan tells of another man he was told to "Hit in the head!" And a young female college student he was to hit in the Kidney!

Now, all I am doing is reading you the testimony of these people. The words are their words. And such

tactics, apart from being dangerous, especially with 72 year old people and other people who are under physical duress, leave me dumbfounded, to say nothing of their foolishness. And recently, you might be interested to know, that an 85 year old woman came forward for a healing touch from Benny Hinn. And while she was in line, he slew someone in the Spirit, who fell over and crushed the woman's hip and she died. And there is now a \$5,000,000 lawsuit against Benny Hinn. That kind of ridiculous chaos that ends in the death of an elderly woman is not the power of God. Charismatic chaos is usually not so physically fatal, but it is spiritually fatal for many.

Some concerned parents wrote our church, and I get letters about this quite regularly, my file is fairly large, but their daughter had become involved with a spiritual gifts workshop in a large well known Third Wave church. The mother wrote this,

In December of 1989 she began (speaking of the daughter) speaking in tongues. Shortly thereafter she began to see angels. An angel in armor always stands outside the front door of her home and another stands inside her living room. He has large wings. She says she asked God to send her angels for protection while her husband was on a business trips. A few months later she began to see demons also. A monkey like demon sat on her husband's head one night and hissed at her. She sees others riding on tops of cars or standing on rooftops and some in battle with the angels. She sometimes sees darkness around people. She believes seeing this is a God given gift. When I told her to test the spirits, she got angry. She said the Lord said, "Yes, it is I the Lord." I believe they are all demons. I told her to read the Bible. She said she only reads the Scripture numbers the Holy Spirit puts in her mind.

We visited her and attended one of her group meetings. A prophet from Kansas City came (one of the Kansas City Prophets. That's a group that I have mentioned); he said something about the past, present, or future of nearly everyone in the room. Somethings were incredibly true and other things haven't happened yet. Our daughter now wants to develop this gift in herself and can now sometimes see a person's sin written on their forehead. She will then expel a demon. Since I told her to test the spirits, as the Bible tells us, she will not tell me what she's seeing anymore. I feel there is a wall between us.

I listened this week to five tapes of one of these prophets, who supposedly can tell you your phone number, your address, and so forth. And by doing those kinds of things, which can be done by chicanery, little different than the Amazing Crescan (sp.) does them, or could be demonic, he thus convinces people that, indeed, he is a prophet. And once the convincing is done by the people who are already are under the power of suggestion, and are already "setup" to buy into anything that is supernatural, whatever the person then says is taken as truth. Like so many Charismatics, that young woman has come to believe that her experiences obviate Bible study and spiritual discernment. Why should she listen to her mother when God talks to her? I've seen marriages break up. I went through the breakup of a marriage of a wife who had no reason to listen to her husband because God talked to her. These people believe that they have some kind of a superior relationship with the Holy Spirit. They don't need Scripture, except an isolated verse or two that supposedly the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

You see, the Charismatic movement breeds this kind of catastrophe in marriages, in families, in

churches, because it discourages people from discerning the truth from Scripture. It discourages the people from using the mind. Instead, truth is appraised subjectively, through signs and wonders and mystical means. Kenneth Hagan again, who really is the Patriarch of the Signs and Wonders movement, explains his criteria for judging between true and false spiritual gifts,

When God moves everybody will be blessed. If something is of the flesh, everybody will have a sick feeling. If something is of the devil, it seems like the hair will stand up on neck. That's a simple way everyone can judge whether they've got any spiritual discernment or not.

You mean to tell me that I can know if I have spiritual discernment by whether I feel sick or whether the hair stands up on the back of my neck? There it is, as explicitly as it can be stated, by a leading Charismatic. That's how you determine spiritual discernment. And he is defining there exactly what is wrong with Charismatic mysticism. Spiritual discernment, from the Biblical perspective is unnecessary. It's really a very simple system of biofeedback. Again and again Charismatics hear the same message, "Put your mind on hold, ignore your reason, listen to your feelings." That kind of extreme mysticism contradicts everything Scripture teaches about true discernment.

Spiritual gifts are not supposed to produce mindless chaos and mindless pandemonium in the church, nor are they to be a way that a person can show off his spirituality before the crowd. They are never to be used selfishly; they are never to be used in some kind of performance; they are never to be used to cause you to lapse into some kind of spiritual coma or put other people in a state of unconsciousness.

Kenneth Copeland, a rather comedic child of Kenneth Hagan, in terms of having the same theology, writes, and this is a quote, "Believers are not supposed to be led by logic. We are not even to be led by good sense. The ministry of Jesus was never governed by logic or reason." That's just not true. Now there is so much that we can learn and look at in 1 Corinthians. Let me just give you a little bit of a feeling for how Paul dealt with this. I don't want to take much time, so listen very carefully. Very brief.

The Charismatic gifts as we know them, were operating in the early church, for God had purpose for them at that time. And in the book [Charismatic Chaos] there will be a chapter on the matter of tongues and I will deal with it a little later in our series so I don't want to get into it in detail now, but simply to say, there was a time when all the spiritual gifts were operative, but they had become misused and abused and counterfeited in Corinth. And we would have to say that the Charismatic Chaos of today is very much like the Charismatic Chaos of Corinth. Some of the factors differ. In that day all the gifts were operative, today they are not. But there were abuses then and there are abuses now. The situation was so abusive that Paul writes 1 Corinthians to correct it.

They had a lot of problems in Corinth: divisions, personality cults, cliques, moral compromise, and other desperate ills in the church. Carnality outweighed spirituality; sexual perversion, fornication, incest, adultery were being tolerated. Worldliness was there, materialism was in the church, church members were suing each other. There was rebellion against apostolic authority. There was marital conflict going on. The role of single people was misunderstood and misrepresented. Liberty was being abused. Idolatry

was being practiced. Selfishness was rampant. Pride was widespread. Demon worship had come in. The church was abusing God's intention for the Lord's Table and the Love Feast. And in the middle of all of this, spiritual gifts were being perverted, misused and prostituted.

This is one corrupt church. The problem wasn't that they lacked spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul said, "You are not lacking in any gift." It was how they fouled them up. So a major segment of that first letter, 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, directs itself at this terrible, terrible misuse of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians, like the Charismatics today, had tended to equate the Holy Spirit's work with ecstatic involuntary frenetic and mysterious activity. And if it was inexplicable from the human level, they would say it was the Holy Spirit, even to the point that some people were cursing Jesus and they were saying it was the Holy Spirit because the phenomena seemed so bizarre. The wilder and the more agitated the person was, the more godly and spiritual he was supposed to be. They got to the point where in order for them to say it is the spirit, it had to be bizarre. Then there was the desire to be seen and the desire to appear as being spiritual. People were exploiting and perverting the gift of tongues particularly, and counterfeiting it with ecstatic babble that came out of their past paganism. They were confusing the work of the Holy Spirit with mystical practices they had known from their former pagan religion.

You see for over a thousand years that part of the world had been dominated with the mystery religions. The pagan mystery religions. They can be traced all the way back to Babylon. But they cultivated, all of them had this in common, they cultivated a magical, sensual, communion with deity. The assumption in the mystery religions and their cultic kind of form of worship, was that you get yourself in some kind of state, a mindless kind of state, a transcendent kind of state, an irrational, not logical, not reasonable kind of mystical state, and when you get into that you will then commune with the deity. You can do it through drunkenness and so they got drunk in the pagan religions. You can do it through the passion of sexual involvement, and so there were priestesses who acted as temple prostitutes, and you could come in and throw yourself into an orgy. And in the euphoria of that orgy, and in the stupor of being drunk, in the stupor of that whole event, supposedly you were to commune with deity.

Paul has that in mind, certainly in Ephesians 5, when he says, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." If you really want to connect with God, be filled with the Spirit, don't be drunk. They would do almost anything to get into a semiconscious, hallucinatory, hypnotic, or orgiastic spell, because they believed that somehow that got them in touch with deity. This is not very far different than going back into the 60's in the drug culture, and the things Timothy Leary tried to say about how you transcend this world and touch the divine, and what the Eastern Mystics were saying, as they were advocating the same kind of stuff. Whether from literal intoxication, or some kind of emotional hysteria, or exhilaration, worshipers falling into some kind of euphoria assumed they were then in union with the deity.

According to S. Angus, once professor of New Testament and Historical Theology at Saint Andrews College at Sidney, the ecstasy experience by the mystery religion worshiper, brought him into

A mystic ineffable condition, in which the normal functions of personality were in abeyance, and the

moral strivings which formed character, virtually ceased or were relaxed, while the emotional and the intuitive were accentuated.

In other words, the worshiper would get into a state where his mind would go into neutral and his emotions would take over. The intellect and the conscious would give way to passion, sentiment, and emotion. This was ecstasy. Angus further said,

Ecstasy might be induced by vigil and fasting, tense religious expectancy, whirling dances, physical stimuli, the contemplation of the sacred objects, the effect of stirring music, inhalation of fumes, revivalistic contagion, hallucinations, suggestions and all other means belonging to the apparatus of the mysteries. One ancient writer speaks of men going out of themselves to be wholly established in the divine.

It is exactly what happened in Corinth and it is still going on today. As the mystery worshiper experienced such ecstasy, he believed he was lifted above the level of his ordinary experience into an abnormal sense of consciousness and therein he could really see God. And according to Angus again, he says, "Ecstasy could range anywhere from nonmoral delirium to that consciousness of oneness with the invisible, and the dissolution of painful individuality which marks the mystics of all ages." The person literally became irrational, unreasonable, out of touch with reality. I don't think it is too far afield to say that there are testimonies by Pentecostal Charismatic believers that seem to me to sound very much like this. They explain their various states of euphoria as engaging in communion with the Holy Spirit, but is it that? Certainly not by Biblical definition. Is it only an emotional high? Is it only some kind of psychological self-induced hypnosis? Is it only falling under the spell of the power of suggestion? Or is it demonic? In any case it is not Biblical. It certainly isn't, "Come now let us reason together, says the Lord." It certainly is not, "Let everything be done decently and in order."

The problem Paul dealt with in Corinth is the same problem he deals with through his letters in the charismatic movement today. The problem is this: "How do you tell the real from the counterfeit?" And the only answer I have to you, Beloved, is to take it to the Word of God--and if it isn't there, it isn't real. That's the only place we can go. You certainly can't believe experience. Why? Because "Many will say, 'Lord, Lord,'" and they will prophesy in His name, and they will cast out demons in His name, and they will do miracles, at least what appear to be miracles, in His name. But He will say "Depart from me, I never knew you. Who are you? You workers of iniquity." We need to warn the true believers in the Charismatic movement that Satan is having a field day counterfeiting, because you're not checking with the Word, and because you are not using the mind that God has given you to understand His truth. Christ is being dishonored.

Remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:2, he said to the Corinthians, "You are being led astray, just like you used to be. You used to be led astray to dumb idols, led astray like a prisoner. You were just led astray to your false gods. Now, that you have become a believer, you can't let that happen. You can't just throw yourself open and be carried away by demons in the ecstasies of these events." The truly spiritual person is not someone who sweeps away into trances, ecstasies, emotional frenzies, who falls

over in a dead faint. The true spiritual person isn't somebody who goes into a glory cloud for 15 minutes, can't speak English, comes back and doesn't know he has been gone. When a person is out of control, it is never the Holy Spirit! The fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Galatians 5). No where in Scripture do we see the real gifts of the Spirit operating when somebody is out of control, or when somebody is under a supernatural seizure.

And so Beloved, as we look at this movement, we have to be concerned and literally sad in our hearts because of so many people being led astray in the Name of Christ. But I guess that we should expect it. My dad used to say, "Nobody counterfeits brown paper and sticks, because brown paper and sticks aren't worth counterfeiting. They don't have any value. Wherever you see a counterfeit," he used to say to me, "just be sure there is a real, because people only counterfeit what's real, and they only counterfeit what's valuable." Counterfeiters copy what's valuable and what is priceless in the Church. Listen to me, what is priceless in the Church is the true work of the Spirit, and the true gifts of the Spirit, and the true ministry of the Spirit. And how tragic it is that a whole generation of people are cut off from the reality because they bought the counterfeit. Many of these people have been saved but they are part of a system that cuts them off from the true working of God's Spirit. The Church will be built up when spiritual gifts are used properly; when the Scripture is understood properly, taught accurately; and when the believers are walking in the Spirit with self control, obeying the Word of God.

Well, let's bow in a word of prayer. Father, even as we have talked about these things tonight, we have been brought back again to the great foundation of your Word, where we must test everything. Help us to know that it is not enough that someone lifts up your name and says, "Lord, Lord," and claims you. It is not enough that they preach and cast out demons and do wondrous things. They could be false prophets. They could be sheep dressed up in prophet's garments, and the fruit of their life wouldn't support their claims, and someday you'll bring it to light. Lord, give us discernment. There are many that you love, that belong to you who are swept up in this movement, tragically exposing themselves to error, demonic activity, confusion, and on the other hand, cutting themselves off from the true path of sanctification, the true work of the Spirit, and the true interpretation and proclamation of your word. Lord, how tragic that they would be dispossessed of that and think they've come to a higher level of spirituality, when, in fact, it's a lower one. And what they think is something more is really something less.

Father, I pray that you will bring clarity and sanity and the true work of the Spirit to bear upon the confusion, that you true Church may be delivered out of that confusion into the light of the true work of the blessed Spirit, whose task it is to move us from one level of glory to the next, evermore into the image of Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen.

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It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 8, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 8**

# ***What was Happening in the Early Church?***

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Tonight we are going to go back to our study of this matter of Charismatic Chaos. The message tonight will be a bit more technical and deal more closely with the texts of Scripture than some of ours in the past, in which we have been assessing the movement from a somewhat theological point of view. Tonight we want to look a little more tightly at the Book of Acts, because the Book of Acts is basically the location for most of the Charismatic defense of their doctrine. Experience is the foundation upon which much of the Charismatic system is built, and it is very important to identify that. Experience is the authority that Charismatics most frequently cite to validate their teachings. They have an experience-centered approach to truth that even influences the way they approach the Bible. In fact, the Book of Acts, which is a journal of the Apostle's experiences, is where Charismatics usually turn in search of Biblical support for what they believe.

Now, I want you to look with me to the Book of Acts tonight; we are going to be looking at a couple of chapters, just giving you a feel for some very key ones, in light of the Charismatic theology. The Book of Acts is a historical narrative, in contrast, for example, to the Epistles of the New Testament which are didactic, or doctrinal, or instructive to the Church. This is a chronicle. It is a story, really of the early Church experiences. The Epistles on the other hand contain detail instructions for believers throughout all the Church Age. So in the Epistles you have the rather permanent instruction and doctrine for the

Church. In the Book of Acts you have a chronicle of the history of the Early Church experiences. Historically, Christians committed to a Biblical perspective have recognized the difference. And it is an important difference to recognize. Evangelical theologians, through the years, have drawn the heart of their doctrine from Bible passages intended to teach the Church. They have understood that Acts is an inspired, historical record of the Apostolic period, not necessarily viewing every event or every phenomena that occurs there, as normative for the entire Church Age.

But, on the other hand, Charismatics who have an insatiable craving for experiences and particularly for the experiences described in the Book of Acts, have assembled a doctrinal system that views the extraordinary events of the early Apostolic Age as necessary and continuing hallmarks of the Holy Spirit's work. They view the Book of Acts as normative, or what should be normative for all Christians in all ages. They see the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts as tokens of spiritual power that are to be routinely expected by all Christians living in all times. Now, that is a rather serious interpretive error. In fact, it undermines the Charismatic's comprehension of Scripture. It muddies several key Biblical issues, crucial to a right understanding of Scriptural doctrine.

Gordon Fee, a writer, who himself is a Charismatic, commented on the hermeneutical difficulties posed by the way Charismatics typically approach the Book of Acts, with these words, and I quote,

If the primitive church is normative, which expression of it is normative? Jerusalem? Antioch? Philippi? Corinth? That is, why do not all the churches sell their possessions and have all things in common? Or further, is it at all legitimate to take any descriptive statements as normative? If so, how does one distinguish those which are from those which are not? For example, must we follow the pattern of Acts 1:26 and select leaders by lot? Just exactly what role does historical precedent play in Christian doctrine or in the understanding of Christian experience?

Now, he introduces a very important point. If we are going to take the Book of Acts as normative, then we must take the Book of Acts in its total as normative, and we are going to have some immensely difficult issues to deal with. The fact of the matter is, that Acts was never intended to be the primary basis for teaching doctrine to the Church. The Book of Acts records only the earliest days of the Church Age and shows the Church in tradition, coming out of the old age into the new, coming out, as it were, of the Old Testament into the New Testament. The apostolic healings, and miracles, and signs, and wonders evident in the Book of Acts were not even common to all believers even in those days, but were uniquely restricted to the Apostles and those who worked alongside of them. They were exceptional events, each with specific purposes and always associated with the ministry of the Apostles; and their frequency can be seen decreasing dramatically even from the beginning of the Book of Acts to the end.

It seems as though, at the opening of the Book of Acts, there is a flurry of the miraculous, and towards the end it's absent. The Book of Acts was written by Luke, the physician, as you know. Acts covers a crucial period that started with the Church at Pentecost and ended about 30 years later with Paul in prison, following his third missionary journey. Transitions are seen from beginning to end in the Book of Acts. Changes come in almost every chapter as the old covenant fades away and the New Covenant

comes in all its fullness. Even the Apostle Paul was caught in some of those changes, which can be witnessed as you look into chapter 18 of Acts and chapter 21, and see him, although he is fully under the New Covenant, still exhibiting ties to the old, as indicated by his taking certain Jewish vows which were prescribed in the Old Testament.

In the Book of Acts we are in a transition which moved from the Synagogue to the Church. We are in a transition which moves away from an order of law into an order of grace. The Church is transformed from a group of Jewish believers to a body made up of Jews and Gentiles united in Christ. Believers at the beginning of Acts were related to God under an old pattern. By the end, all believers were in Christ, living under a new pattern, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, in a new and unique relationship.

Acts, therefore, covers an extraordinary time in history. A time of transition from the old to the new. And the transition it records, listen carefully, is never to be repeated. There is only one time frame in which you move from the old to the new, that history does not come again. It never will come again, and those elements that are true of that transition are not repeatable, for the transition itself needs no repetition. Therefore, we must say, the only teachings in the Book of Acts which can be called normative for the Church are those that are explicitly taught elsewhere in Scripture.

Now, as you look at the Book of Acts from the Charismatic viewpoint, looking at it as it were through their eyes, the major theological distinction of that movement has to be supported in the Book of Acts, and they think they can do it. It is what I would call the doctrine of Subsequence. That's a term that others have used. The doctrine of Subsequence. What that basically means is, that you get saved and sometimes subsequent to that, some later date, hopefully, you get the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is primarily the distinctive doctrine of Pentecostal Charismatic theology; that when you're saved you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you are redeemed: at some later time you get the Baptism of the Holy Spirit--subsequent to that saving work.

They will also say, secondly, that it is often, some of them will say, always, associated with speaking in tongues. Old line traditional Pentecostalism for the most part said, "The Baptism of the Spirit is subsequent to salvation and is always identified by speaking in tongues," some will say, "Often identified by speaking in tongues." The third component is that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit often manifests, or always manifests by speaking in tongues, is something to be earnestly, zealously, and passionately sought for. Now, that is really the essence of the distinctive kind of Charismatic doctrine that so many of us are familiar with.

They go to the Book of Acts to endeavor to prove this Subsequence doctrine, this tongues as an attendant proof of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and for some strange reason to even verify the seeking after the gift or the Baptism. The doctrine of Subsequence [which says] that there is for Christians, a baptism in the Spirit, distinct from and subsequent to the experience of salvation, and that that is somehow associated with the matter of tongues, is at the very heart of their theology. And so we must be able to deal with this and I want us to do that tonight because we are really cutting into the very core of what they historically have taught.

In his rather thorough investigation of Pentecostal theology, Frederick Dale Bruner wrote, "Pentecostals believe that the Spirit has baptized every believer into Christ's conversion, but that Christ has not baptized every believer into the Spirit Pentecost." Not only do most Charismatics believe that the Baptism of the Spirit happens at some point after salvation, but that it only happens to those who seek after it diligently, passionately, and zealously. And then as I said, when it does come it is usually, if not always attended by speaking in tongues. Now, they are very definitive, may I say, about this doctrine. May I also say, they are very vague about most other doctrines. In most other areas of theology they are vague, but in this one they usually speak a clear word regarding what they believe.

Now, some of them attempt to support their doctrine of Subsequence from the Book of Acts because they really can't go anywhere else. Some of them don't attempt to support it at all: they just say it's true. But the ones who attempt to support it have to go to the Book of Acts because there is no where else to go. Let me show you why. Maybe you say, "They ought to go the First Corinthians, doesn't that talk about the Holy Spirit and Tongues?" It does. Open your Bibles for a moment to 1Corinthians, chapter 12, and let's see how well they would fare with that doctrine in 1Corinthians 12. 1Corinthians 12, verse 13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." Now, there you have the Holy Spirit as an agent in baptism, there you have the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, but you have absolutely nothing about Subsequence. You have absolutely nothing about tongues, and you have absolutely nothing about seeking. It is a fact that is stated. There is no indication that it is subsequent to salvation; in fact, the very statement that it has happened to all of us, indicates that it is concurrent with salvation. It cannot take place at some point after salvation or Paul couldn't say it was true of all Christians--but he does!

You say, "Well, maybe they ought to go 1Corinthians, chapter 14, doesn't that talk about tongues? And doesn't that talk about the Holy Spirit?" Yes, but if you go to 1Corinthians 14, you are not going to find any Subsequence there. You are not going to find any discussion of the Baptism of the Spirit. You are not going to find any connection of tongues with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and you are not going to find any authorization to seek after tongues or to seek after the baptism. So you can't find any of that in 1Corinthians 12 or 14, and if you have exhausted that section there isn't anything else in the New Testament that mentions tongues, except Acts. So they are stuck with Acts, even though the clear teaching of 1Corinthians 12 is that every believer has been baptized by the agency of the Holy Spirit, Christ using the Spirit to place the believer into the Body, and that occurs at salvation and it is true of every Christian. There is no connection to tongues and it isn't something you seek for, it's something that god does for you at your salvation.

And so they are left with no where to go but Acts. And so they violate the nature of the Book of Acts, which is a historical record of the Early Church and the unique transitional apostolic period, and make it normative for everybody, because that is the only place they can go to defend their unique theology. Now, when you go into the Book of Acts, and I want you to go there with me, Acts, chapter 2 to start with, when you go to the Book of Acts, you go to four chapters, chapter 2, chapter 8, chapter 10, and chapter 19. Obviously, we can't cover all of that, that would be an absolute impossibility; but those are the places that they go to support their view, and I want to give you a little bit of a feeling for this

because you need to be able to understand and grasp this.

The truth of the matter is, that even the Book of Acts fails to support this Charismatic theology of Subsequence, proof by Tongues and the need to seek. For example, they want to go to Acts 2, 8, 10, 19, because those record four different occasions in which the Holy Spirit came. In some of those occasions there is Tongues. In some of those occasions there is the coming of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation. But those four occasions are not uniform. The first one describes the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the second one the coming of the Holy Spirit to the new group of believers in Samaria, the third one, Acts 10, the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Gentile converts, Cornelius and his house. The fourth one, chapter 19, the coming of the Holy Spirit to some hangover disciples of John the Baptist, who were still living under an Old Testament economy, because they didn't know the gospel yet; somehow it had missed them.

All four of these groups have unique experiences of receiving the Holy Spirit, but their experiences are different. For example, in Acts, chapter 2, and Acts, chapter 8, believers do receive the Holy Spirit after salvation. In Acts, chapter 10, and chapter 19, believers received the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, so they are not in agreement on that issue. The doctrine of Subsequence then cannot be convincingly defended even from the Book of Acts, because it isn't consistent. You say, "What about Tongues?" In chapter 2, chapter 10, and chapter 19, tongues are mentioned, but in chapter 8, they are not. So you can't even find anything that is normative at that point, at least that is written in Scripture. You say, "Well, what about seeking after it?" The believers in Acts 2, they say, were in the Upper Room seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is no seeking in chapter 8, there is no seeking in chapter 10, and there is no seeking in chapter 19. The truth of the matter is, there is no seeking in chapter 2 either; they were in the Upper Room doing nothing but patiently waiting. It doesn't tell us that they were seeking; no seeking is mentioned.

Now the point is clear. To say that the Book of Acts presents a normal pattern for receiving the Holy Spirit attended by Tongues and for seeking that, presents a major problem because these separate accounts of four different groups who received the Holy Spirit are all different. So if you are going to make the Book of Acts normative, which group is the normative group? It is true that Christians at Pentecost, in Acts 2, and that Gentiles in Cornelius' household, in chapter 10, and the Jews at Ephesus who had only the Baptism of John, did receive the Holy Spirit and Tongues or languages followed, but because those three events occurred doesn't mean that they are to be the standard for every other Christian.

In fact, none of these passages, 2, 8, 10, or 19, give any indication that they are to be the norm for all believers for all time. In fact, there is plenty of indication that they are not. If Tongues were to be the normal experience then why aren't they mentioned in chapter 8, when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit? And why does the text of Acts 2 not say that everyone who believed, following Peter's sermon, and received the Holy Spirit, spoke in Tongues? Do you remember when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost? Three thousand people believed; it says in Acts 2:38 that they received the Holy Spirit. Remember that? Why didn't they speak in tongues? In order for something to be normative, it has to be common to everybody. And if the Holy Spirit wanted to say that Tongues was a normative attendant to

the coming of the Holy Spirit, the normative time for it to happen would have been among the 3,000 that were converted. Right?

John Stott reasons,

The 3,000 do not seem to have experienced the same miraculous phenomena, the rushing mighty wind, the tongues of flame, or the speech in foreign languages; at least nothing is said about these things. Yet because of God's assurance through Peter, they must have inherited the same promise and received the same gift, that is, the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, there was this difference between them: the 129 were regenerate already and received the Baptism of the Spirit only after the waiting upon God for 10 days; the 3,000 on the other hand were unbelievers, received the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit simultaneously, and it happened immediately--they repented and believed without any need to wait at all.

This distinction between the two companies, the 120 and the 3,000, is of great importance for the norm for today must surely be the second group, the three thousand, and not as is often supposed, the first group. The fact that the experience of the 120 was in two distinct stages was due simply to historical circumstances; they could not have received the Pentecostal gift before Pentecost. But those historical circumstances have long since ceased to exist. We live after the event of Pentecost, like the 3,000 did. With us therefore, as with them, the forgiveness of sins and the gift or Baptism of the Spirit, are received together.

Without question, Acts 2 is a key passage from which Pentecostals and Charismatics develop their theology of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it would be worth our while to just look briefly at it. Look at the first four verses of Acts 2,

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues (or languages) as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Now, that describes what happened on the day of Pentecost. As noted before, the Pentecostals and Charismatics say that is the doctrine of Subsequence. They say,

Look, these people were already believers. They had already been saved. And so they were saved first, at some earlier time, and here they are sitting around waiting for the Holy Spirit.

But the obvious answer to that is, "Well, of course, because the Holy Spirit hasn't yet come at all, and doesn't come until the day of Pentecost." Certainly there is subsequence here, and certainly we would agree with the Pentecostal theology that they had experienced salvation. I mean, you can go all the way back into Luke 10:20, where Jesus tells His apostles to, "Rejoice, that your names are recorded in

heaven." You can go back to John 15:3, where Jesus says to the same apostles, "You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you," so He affirms that they have a right relationship to God. We could call them saved. And so people say, "Well, they were saved way back then, and see, the Holy Spirit comes later!" But, how much insight do you have to have to realize that, of course it's subsequent to their salvation because they were really saved prior to the arrival of the Holy Spirit! Once the Holy Spirit came, there is no need for a waiting for Him to come again, because He already comes to indwell His Church on the day of Pentecost, and from then on continually indwells His Church from the moment of salvation forward.

Most Charismatics would even go a step further. They would suggest that not only were the disciples saved before the day of Pentecost, but watch this, that the disciples also received the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost. But they just got a little bit of Him. You need to remember this, if you confront a Charismatic sometime and you say, "You don't believe that when you're saved you received the Holy Spirit." They will say, "Yes, we do. Oh, yes we do." And it's true they do. They believe that you receive the Spirit in some small measure, but the Baptism of the Spirit is an explosion of the Spirit's power in fullness that comes into your life. So you don't want to accuse Charismatics of denying that a Christian has the Holy Spirit. They would say that you have the Holy Spirit in a limited way, but you don't have the fullness of the Spirit and the power of the Spirit. They would go back, for example, to John, chapter 20. And in John 20, verses 21 and 22, Jesus looks at His disciples, and the Scripture says "Jesus breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Wow! That's interesting.

Way back in John 20, He's saying that to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit," that's before the Holy Spirit is even sent on the day of Pentecost. And according to standard Charismatic interpretation of that text, they say, "Jesus then, was giving them the Holy Spirit, in a limited way. They had to wait for the higher level explosion of the Baptism of the Spirit that gave them their real power." We have to ask the question, "Is that really correct?" When in John 20:21-22, Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," was that a statement of fact? If you look very carefully at that text, the Charismatic view doesn't really hold up under scrutiny. The passage doesn't say the disciple actually received the Holy Spirit, it doesn't say that. It simply said that Jesus blew on them, a graphic sort of an illustration, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." We would have to conclude that it was a pledge, that it was a promise that wasn't fulfilled until the day of Pentecost. In fact, all you have to do is look at them to know that they hadn't received the Holy Spirit. Ensuing statements in John 20 seem to confirm the disciples didn't receive the Spirit in the Upper Room, because eight days later, [when] He came to where they were, they were hiding. They were full of fear, they were in a locked room. This is more than a week after He breathed on them, and more than a week after He promised them, and they hadn't gone any where or done anything that would manifest the Spirit's presence.

The strongest arguments, however, appear in the early verses in the Book of Acts. Verse 4,

Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Jesus said it hasn't happen yet, it's been promised, but it hasn't happened. It's yet to come. That goes all the way back to John 14:16, where Jesus said, "I will ask the father, and He will give you another Helper, that he may be with you." They are still waiting. He gave them the promise when He breathed on them, but it hasn't yet been fulfilled. Acts 1:8, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Which means, He hasn't come yet. If the Spirit had come upon them in John 20, He wouldn't have said, "He hasn't come yet."

Two other passages demonstrate very clearly that the Holy Spirit wasn't come until the day of Pentecost, John 7:39, listen to what Jesus said, "This He spoke of the Spirit," you know when He said, "out of you bellies shall flow rivers of living water." "This He spoke of the Spirit," writes John, "whom those who believed in Him were to receive," but listen to this, "for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet," what? "glorified" (that means ascended). That passage explicitly states that the Spirit would not come until Jesus had been glorified, and He wouldn't be glorified until He ascended into heaven. So until Jesus ascended there in Acts 1, went into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit had not [yet] come.

In John 16:7, Jesus told the disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him." The same thing, He's not coming until I get there. So the Holy Spirit had not come, they did not receive a little bit of the Holy Spirit, only later to get an explosion. They didn't receive any of the indwelling of the Spirit of God until the day of Pentecost. At that point the Spirit of God took up residence in them and they were baptized by Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit into the body. So we are at a transition period, an obvious transition period between the old economy and the new. And these apostles are caught right in that transition with the others who made up the 120.

Now, what about the Charismatic idea that the Holy Spirit is to be sought, eagerly sought? We have no indication in the Upper Room that anybody was seeking anything. There is no evidence that they were pleading or seeking anything; they were just waiting. Nor is there any indication throughout the entire Book of Acts that anybody was seeking after some baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. There is not one incident, not one incident, even where the phenomena of the coming of the Spirit and tongues occurs that indicates that anybody in the Early Church ever sought such an experience. Not one. This must effect somehow the Pentecostal doctrine!

When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost a new order was established and since that time the Holy Spirit comes to every believer at the moment of faith and indwells that believer in a permanent, abiding relationship. That's why Romans 8:9 says, "If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." Conversely, if you belong to Christ, you have the Holy Spirit. Paul even says to the Corinthians, who were so fouled up, "What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God, and you are not your own? You have been bought with a price," chapter 6. We have all been made to drink of the same Spirit--every Christian.

So, what you have in Acts 2 then, is the initial reception of the Holy Spirit. The disciples were baptized

by the Spirit accompanied by a sound from heaven like a mighty rushing wind, cloven tongues as of fire, rested on each of them. At that point, they being filled with the Spirit, began to speak in other languages. The miraculous ability to speak the languages of the people who gathered for Pentecost, to declare to them the wonderful works of God, had a definite purpose: it was to be a sign of judgment on unbelieving Israel. It was and unfolded to be, a sign of inclusion of the other groups into the one Church, and we will see that in a moment, and it confirmed the Apostles' spiritual authority. It had a very distinct purpose.

First of all, as I said, it was a sign to unbelieving Israel. Do you remember that the prophet Isaiah had said, "If you don't listen to God when He speaks a language you can understand, the day is going to come when he speaks a language that you can't understand." That's a judgment. And when they began to speak languages that were foreign to the dwellers of Jerusalem, God was saying that it has come; the time has come. You have committed the ultimate atrocity in the crucifixion of the Messiah; you didn't listen when I spoke in your language; now, here's a language you won't understand. And this was an indication of God's judgment about to fall on them as a nation, which judgment fell in no small way in 70 A.D. Also, this unique gift of tongues acted as a verification sign of the legitimacy of each new group that was added to the one Body of Christ, as we shall see.

And so it had some very specific and wonderful purpose. It was a unique wonder associated with Pentecost. Pentecost is not repeatable, and so neither is the necessity of such a sign, except on very rare and unique occasions also recorded in the Book of Acts. By the way, an interesting footnote, in 1976, Pentecostals held a world conference in Jerusalem. A world congress in Jerusalem, and I am quoting the program, "To celebrate the ongoing miracle of Pentecost." Delegates came from all over the world and had to use interpreters and headphones! Now, just think that one through: so they could understand in their own language! That is not the ongoing miracle of Pentecost.

Now, let's go to chapter 8, and see what happens in Acts, chapter 8, and why that's important. They use this as a proof text. It discusses the persecution of the Church in the early part of the chapter, and the scattering of the disciples out of Jerusalem throughout Judea and Samaria. Now, the result comes down in verse 14; they go into Samaria, receive the Word of God; they believe. And you remember there was a choice preacher in Samaria. Who was he? Philip. "And when the word came back to the Apostles in Jerusalem," verse 14, "that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent them Peter and John." They are going to send the Apostles to find out about this. "They came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit."

You say, "Now wait a minute, this proves their point, there is Subsequence here." Yes, I didn't say there wasn't; there is Subsequence in chapter 2, there is Subsequence in chapter 8, there just isn't any in chapter 10 or chapter 19, so it's not normative; but here it has a very distinct purpose. The Charismatics would say, "See, here's Subsequence. They had been baptized, they had been saved, and later on they get the Holy Spirit. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but they hadn't received the Holy Spirit. That proves the point." It does not. There is a reason for this, let me tell you what it is.

The Jews hated the Samaritans. Would you understand that to be true from your knowledge of New Testament times? A Samaritan was a "half-breed." A Samaritan was a Jew who thought so little of being Jewish that he intermarried with the Gentile, and polluted, from the Jewish viewpoint, his race, his racial identity. Samaritans were hated. It is said that Jews traveling from the south to the north would go clear around Samaria just so they wouldn't have to walk through it and pollute themselves by being there. That's what made it so unique when it says in Scripture that, "Jesus must needs to go through Samaria," Jews didn't do that. They looked down on Samaritans. And the reason for this little interval between the Samaritan salvation and the coming of the Spirit was in order that the Apostles might get there.

Why? So that the Apostles would see the Samaritans had been saved, and that they would see that the Spirit of God came upon them. Now it is possible that they spoke in tongues and it is not recorded here. It is possible that there were other phenomena that occurred which made it manifest to the Apostles that they were indeed receiving the Holy Spirit. The point is, God didn't want those Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit until two Jewish Apostles were there, because if the Samaritans had their own little private Pentecost, it would be very hard for the Jews to accept them as one in the same body and the same Church, the hatred of the Jews towards them being so great. If the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation without any supernatural sign or fanfare, without the visible presence of the Apostles to mark it and see it and note it and report it; if it had been purely a Samaritan event, the Church born at Pentecost of the Jews would never have accepted it as bonafide, or with great difficulty done that. If the Samaritans would have started their own Christian group, the age old rivalry and hatred could have been perpetuated with the Jewish Church competing against a Samaritan Church.

And so God waited until the Jewish Apostles, the most significant ones, Peter and John showed up, and then he demonstrated that these had truly been converted, and they were being baptized by the Holy Spirit into the same body as the Jews were in; the same Body of Christ, the same Church. It was also important that the Apostles be present so that the Samaritans would understand the power and authority of the Apostles, for they needed to be subject to the Apostles' doctrine.

Now, because of all of these matters in the transition, there was Subsequence, and there was an interval between the time they received Christ under the ministry of Philip, and the time they received the Holy Spirit when the Apostles could be there, because the crucial transition going on in the Early Church was so essential to Church unity and Apostolic teaching and authority. The amazing thing, first of all, was a revival among the Samaritans, and even more amazing, these outcast "half-breeds" received the same Holy Spirit we have and were placed into the same Body, and now we have to love them and accept them as brothers and sisters. That's why the Holy Spirit delayed that. It was an audio-visual lesson, if you will, that the middle wall of partition that Paul talks about in Ephesians 2 was broken down.

I say there must have been some powerful demonstration, I don't know what it was; otherwise Simon wouldn't have come along and tried to buy the power. So when the Holy Spirit came upon them there must have been some visible manifestation of that and it could well have been similar to what occurred on the day of Pentecost; that would make sense. What was really crucial though, was that everybody understand that there weren't two churches, there was just one--both had received the same thing.

Now go to chapter 10. Chapter 10 takes us the next step in the unfolding of the Book of Acts. It starts in Jerusalem and goes to Samaria, and then it begins to move out to the uttermost part of the world. And now we meet the first Gentile convert in Acts chapter 10. And you know the wonderful story about Cornelius. God gives a vision to Peter. Tells him that I am no respecter of persons. And after the vision, three men came to the house where Peter was staying and explained that they had been sent by Cornelius, this Gentile, and that Peter was supposed to go and teach Cornelius about God. Now, Peter had just had a vision, in which God had set him up for this. Peter swallowed his Jewish prejudice, which already had been dented severely by Samaritan conversions. And now he agrees to accompany these Gentiles back to Caesarea, where Cornelius lived.

Now, you've got to understand, that for a Jew to get near a Gentile is a serious thing. They didn't ever want to eat a meal cooked by a Gentile; they didn't want to eat with a utensil touched by a Gentile; they didn't go into a Gentile house; they didn't even want Gentile dust on their feet: when they came back into Jerusalem they shook the dust off of their feet so they wouldn't carry Gentile dirt into the Holy Land. They looked down on Gentiles.

Peter goes there. It says, "The Holy Spirit," verse 44, "fell on all those who were listening to the message. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed." They couldn't believe it! What's happening? Gentiles are getting the Holy Spirit! And they said, "The gift of the Holy Spirit is being poured out on Gentiles also." You know, they are kind of like Jonah; they were looking for somewhere where they can cry. "For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. And then Peter answered, "I love this answer, "Well, surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" It's almost like he said, "I wish there was some way out of this guys, but there isn't. It has happened. It's tough to swallow, but it has happened." "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Would you please notice here that there is no subsequence. They were saved; the Spirit came; they were placed in the Body. There is no Subsequence here, but again they received the Holy Spirit attendant with tongues. Why? So that Peter, and John, and all the circumcised (that's all the Jewish Christians) would know that the Gentiles got the same thing the Samaritans got, and the Samaritans got the same thing we got. Guess what? We are all what? We are all one. We are all one. Gentiles are now a part of the Body of Christ.

Peter, I love it, in chapter 11, Peter goes back to give his report. It's almost comical. He goes back to give his report. Here's his report, verse 15, he says,

Well, as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning! Can you believe that? The same thing. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

And you can know why he said that, as soon as he said "they got the same thing we got," somebody on the council would have said, "Well, why didn't you stop them? Peter, how could you let it happen?" And Peter said, "I couldn't stop it, I couldn't stop it! It just happened. I'm sorry fellows, God was doing it, I couldn't stop it." Shocked as they were they couldn't deny what happened. They held their peace, they glorified God, they acknowledged that God had graciously granted life and salvation to the Gentiles. Verse 18, "When they heard it, they quieted down," and you know it that there was noise going on in there, "and they glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'"

God made sure that the Apostles were there to see it, the Jewish Apostles. God made sure the Spirit came. God made sure the tongues were there, so nobody would think it was any different than Pentecost, so that everybody would understand: "Jew, Gentile, Samaritan--one in Christ." But these Gentiles received the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion, they were baptized with the Spirit of God at that very moment. Then they spoke with tongues to prove that there was no difference, they were part of the Church, and there is no Subsequence here at all. None whatsoever. The norm then, from here on out, is that at the time of salvation, the reception of the Spirit comes at the same time.

Now, there is one final group in the Book of Acts, chapter 19, we can briefly look at this group. This is a fascinating group. These are just some loose people roaming around, who somehow missed the whole deal that was going on. This is another group in transition. It is a fascinating group. Verse one, "And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and he found some disciples." Here's some people around Ephesus. "He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. What are you talking about?' 'Well, into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism.'" Oh, we know who they are. They were, when John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness, baptized by him in preparation for the Messiah. But they didn't have television, radio, newspapers--they hadn't heard that the Messiah came and went! "We were baptized into John's baptism, and Paul said, 'Well, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, (you know, turning from your sins) telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' And when they heard this, (and by the way, a lot more, they got the whole gospel) they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. And there were in all about twelve men."

Fascinating, fascinating; just a loose group of Old Testament Saints roaming around waiting for the Messiah to arrive, and He had come and gone and they didn't know about it. Now they weren't seeking the Holy Spirit, they weren't seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I will tell you something else--they weren't even saved, in New Testament terms. "They said, 'We don't even know anything about a Holy Spirit.'" They certainly knew there was a Holy Spirit, but what they were saying was, "We didn't know about His coming, we don't know what you're talking about." They hadn't even heard about this, because they didn't even know about Jesus Christ. And Paul began to probe and he realized they were disciples of John the Baptist, not Jesus Christ. Old Testament people, Old Testament Saints in transition, still hanging on, looking for the Messiah, twenty years after John the Baptist had died. He says, "You're to be commended," Paul does, "You know, I mean, you're to be commended. You repented as John taught, but

now you have got to go the next step, and that is, you have got to receive the One that John predicted was coming--Jesus Christ."

He spoke about Christ. By the way, he didn't speak about the Holy Spirit, He spoke about Christ. They received Christ and God gave them the Holy Spirit. You don't seek the Holy Spirit, you seek Christ and He gives you the Holy Spirit. Paul wasn't trying to teach them how to get to a second level. There is no Subsequence here. What was missing from them was not information about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, as some Charismatics would want us to believe. What was missing was information about Jesus Christ. When they believed they were immediately baptized. Paul laid his hands on them, making an apostolic identification with them: they received tongues. Why? So they would also be included as sort of the last group. You had Jews, you had Gentiles, Samaritans, and even had a group of Old Testament "Hangover Saints," and they were all in one Church.

You might even say that the whole theme of the Book of Acts, is to show how Jesus' prayer in John 17 was answered. Remember His prayer in John 17? Jesus prayed, "Father, that they may be one, even as Thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in Us." That was His prayer and I really believe that you see in the Book of Acts the answer to that prayer as the Lord puts the Church together, baptizing by the Spirit into the Body, Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, and these wonderful Old Testament Saints. That brought everybody together.

Now these events, beloved, are not to be the Church's pattern as a whole. As I said a long time ago, there is no specific pattern in any one case that is airtight. They don't reflect to normal experience of Christians today. Get this: they don't even reflect to normal experience of Christians in the Early Church. After the few who had that experience on the day of Pentecost, and the few in Samaria, and the household of Cornelius, and this small group of twelve people, we don't know about any other believers who had that same experience, even during the Book of Acts! And Paul goes many places. And Peter and John went many places, and we don't see the pattern of this being repeated over and over and over again. You can't make the tragic mistake of teaching the experience of the Apostles, but rather you must experience the teaching of the Apostles. Acts reveals a new era, a new epoch, a new age, and not what is to be the constant pattern for every Christian throughout history.

Are we supposed to seek the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? No, Simon tried that. He wanted the power; he wanted to buy it. Still people do that, they want the power; they want to buy it. We are not to seek it. Charismatics seem always out for more, and Paul was always insisting that Christ was enough, wasn't he? Any doctrine that adds something to Christ, as some Charismatics seem to desire, stands self-condemned. Michael Green wrote,

The Charismatics were always out for power. They were elated by spiritual power and were always seeking shortcuts to power. It's the same today. Paul's reply is to boast, not of his power, but of his weakness through which alone the power of Christ could shine. Paul knew all about the marks of an Apostle and Signs and Wonders and mighty deeds, but he knew that the power of an Apostle or of any other Christian came from the patient endurance of suffering such as he had, with his thorn in the flesh,

or the patient endurance of reviling and hardship, such as he was subjected to in the course of his missionary work.

The Charismatics had a theology of the resurrection and its power; they needed to learn afresh the secret of the Cross and its shame, which yet produced the power of God. The Charismatics were always out for evidence. That's why tongues, and healings, and miracles are so highly esteemed among them, but Paul knows that we walk by faith while we are in this life, not by sight. There are many times when God calls upon us to trust Him in the dark, without any supporting evidence.

Charismatics today, of course, share those same shortcomings that Michael Green points out. The thirst for something more, the quest for greater power, the desire to see evidences as familiar today as in the apostolic time. They are more compatible, by the way, I think, with the spirit of Simon, than they are with the Spirit of God. Instead of seeking for power and miraculous evidences and the repetition of the unique events of a transitional apostolic era, all Christians, Charismatics and non-Charismatics should seek to know Christ, the fellowship of His suffering, the conformity to His death, because that is what releases resurrection power that is already resident in the indwelling Holy Spirit.

I just want to say this; I don't want to be misunderstood. I don't for one moment disregard the fact that the Spirit of God can, while indwelling the believer, uniquely fill, empower, direct, lead, and touch the Christian. I don't want to use my own experience as a basis for that, but I am very confident by reading the New Testament that the resident Spirit of God, who lives within you, longs to fill your life, Ephesians 5:18. And what that tells me is though you have the Holy Spirit, you may not be experiencing the fullness of His power. And there are those times in our Christian experience, when by our obedience and by the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly, and by our yieldingness to the way of God, the Spirit of God's power is released, and we feel the unique touch of His power in our ministry, in our witness, and in our lives. And we seek those times. They are not mystically apprehended. They come as we yield ourselves to Him and He works His sovereign way with us.

And so I don't want to be misunderstood, as if to say, that the Spirit places you into the Body of Christ, as it were, at the moment of your salvation and then just hangs around to watch what's going on. He doesn't. He's active in ministering in marvelous and thrilling ways, enabling and ennobling you to do those things which otherwise would be impossible: gain victory over your flesh and accomplish the purpose of God through ministry. And so we seek the full expression of the Spirit of God in the life of every believer. We are not seeking Him; we are seeking to know His fullness as we yield ourselves to Him.

Well, I hope that helps you to get a grip on a very important issue. There is more that I could say--time is gone. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the clarity, with which the Word of God yields its truth; that if we simply read it and look openly and honestly at it, it will show us the truth. Father, we do pray for dear brothers and sisters who get caught up in wrong theology. And the great tragedy of it is twofold. One, they therefore, cannot glorify you for what you are truly doing; and secondly, they cut themselves off from the genuine

means of sanctification, and so they forfeit the true power.

Father, how deceptive this process is, of operating under illusions about how you work, about your truth, and about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. How dishonoring to you and debilitating to the believer, to so live and to try to order his Christian experience. We pray Lord that you will give us clarity of mind, that you will help us to discern your truth and walk in it, for your glory, in the Savior's Name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-60, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 9. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 9, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 9**

### ***Does God Still Heal?***

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Well, as you know, we are involved in a study of the Charismatic movement, the contemporary movement, and tonight we come to a section entitled, "Does God Still Heal?" Now, in the messages that I have been giving we have intersected with the thoughts about healing, and we have said some things about that in some of our prior studies and we are not going to repeat those things. But there is much more that needs to be said tonight as we evaluate a movement that advocates healing. In fact, if there is anything that would be typically Charismatic or typically characteristic of the modern Pentecostal movement, Third Wave movement, or Charismatic movement, it would be a major emphasis on healing, and we need to understand that.

Let me begin with some illustrations that set the scene for us. A familiar name to anybody who studies the Charismatic movement and delves into the issues of healing is the name of a man, Hobart Freeman, a very interesting man, at one time a professor of Old Testament at Grace Theological Seminary, from which our own Dick Mayhue graduated. And when he was a professor there in Old Testament, he was considered to be the finest communicator, the finest teacher there. In fact, Hobart Freeman wrote a very significant book entitled, "An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets" which, in 1969, was published and printed by the Moody Bible Institute. So he was considered by everybody to be a mainline evangelical professor, one who not only understood but could adroitly teach the truth of Scripture.

Somewhere along the line he changed. Hobart Freeman believed that God had healed him from Polio. Nonetheless, one of Freeman's legs was so much shorter than the other that he had to wear corrective shoes and walked with great difficulty. Freeman became a pastor. He began his ministry as a Baptist and after he had written and taught for some years, in the mid 60's he became very fascinated with "faith healing," and it moved him into the Charismatic movement, and then it moved him further and further towards the fringes of that movement. He started his own church in Claypool, Indiana; it was known as Faith Assembly and it grew to more than 2,000 members. Meetings were held in a building which he called the "Glory Barn" and Church services were closed to non-members.

So it was kind of a secretive and cultic association. Freeman and the Faith Assembly congregation utterly disdained all medical treatment. He believed that modern medicine was an extension of ancient witchcraft and black magic. To submit to a doctor's remedies, Freeman believed, was to expose oneself to demonic influence. Expectant mothers in Freeman's congregation were told that they must give birth at home with the help only of a church sponsored midwife rather than go to a hospital delivery room or to be treated by a doctor. By the way, obedience to that teaching, cost a number of mothers and infants their lives. In fact, over the years, at least 90 church members died as a result of ailments that would have been easily treatable. No one really knows what the actual death toll would be if nationwide figures could be compiled on all the other people who followed Hobart Freeman's teaching.

After a 15 year old girl whose parents belong to Faith Assembly, died of a medically treatable malady, the parents were convicted of negligent homicide and sentenced to ten years in prison. Freeman himself was charged with aiding and inducing reckless homicide in the case. Shortly afterward, on December 8, 1984, Freeman himself died, interestingly enough of pneumonia and heart failure complicated by a severely ulcerated leg.

Hobart Freeman's theology did not allow him to acknowledge that Polio had left one of his legs disfigured and lame. Quote, he said, "I have my healing." And that is all he would say when anyone pointed out the rather conspicuous inconsistency between his physical disabilities and his theology. Ultimately, his refusal to acknowledge his infirmities cost him his life. He had dutifully, according to his own theology, refused all medical treatment for the maladies that were killing him, and medical science could easily have prolonged his life, but in the end he was a victim of his own teaching.

Now, Hobart Freeman is a very familiar name to those involved in Faith Healing, but he is not the only one. There is another one who succumbed to ailments and that is a man by the name of William Brannom (sp.), and if you study anything about the healing movement you are going to come across the name of William Brannom (sp.). He would be the father of the post World War II healing revival. He was a man reputed to have been instrumental in some of the most spectacular healings that the Pentecostals have ever seen. He died, however, in 1965 at age 56, after suffering for six days from injuries received in an automobile accident. His theology was unbiblical and heretical, and of course when applied to himself his theology of healing had no effect whatsoever, though his followers right to the end, were confident God was going to raise him up. And even after he died they believed that God would raise him from the dead.

As a boy, I was brought to become aware of another Faith Healer who became very, very famous, a man by the name of A. A. Allen. And A. A. Allen, about whom I read and whom I followed with curiosity, was a famed "Tent Evangelist." He took his healing meeting from place to place in a tent. Interestingly enough, A. A. Allen claimed thousands upon thousands of healings, and himself died of sclerosis of the liver in 1967, having secretly been involved with alcohol for many years while supposedly being able to heal everybody else.

Perhaps a more familiar name in the healing movement would be the name of one who is elevated almost to the status of the Roman Catholic elevation of Mary, and that's a woman by the name of Kathryn Kuhlman. Kathryn Kuhlman died of heart failure in 1976, curiously enough. She had battled heart disease for nearly twenty years, and that statement is made by Jamie Buckingham who would have been one of her disciples.

Another one that comes to mind, Ruth Carter Stapleton, was the Faith Healing sister of former United States President Jimmie Carter. [She] refused medical treatment for cancer because of her belief in faith healing. She died of the disease in 1983. And even John Wimber, who would be probably the most prominent modern contemporary Third Wave healer, struggles with chronic angina and heart problems. He begins his book on Power Healing with a personal note. This is what it says; quoting John Wimber, he says,

I had what doctors later suspected were a series of coronary attacks. When we returned home a series of medical tests confirmed my worst fears, I had a damaged heart, possibly seriously damaged. Tests indicated that my heart was not functioning properly, a condition complicated and possibly caused by high blood pressure. These problems combined with my being overweight and overworked meant that I could die at any time.

Wimber writes that he sought God and he says that God told him that in the same way Abraham waited for his child, I was to wait for my healing. In the meantime, he says, "He told me to follow my doctor's orders." Wimber writes, "I wish I could write that at this time I am completely healed, that I no longer have physical problems, but if I did it would not be true." Now, it seems obvious, at least a curiosity to all of us, that so many leading advocates of faith healing are sick!

Annette Capps (sp.), the daughter of Faith Healer Charles Capps (sp.), and herself a Faith Healer, raised that question in her book; her book is entitled "Reverse the Curse in Your Body and Emotions." This is what she writes,

People have stumbled over the fact that the so-called "Healing Minister" later became ill or died. They say, "I don't understand this. If the Power of God came into operation and all those people were healed, why did the evangelist get sick? Why did he or she die?" The reason is because healings that take place in meetings like that are a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This is different from using your own faith. The evangelist who is being used by God in the gifts of healings, is still required to use his own faith in the Word of God to receive divine health and divine healing for his own body. Why? Because the

gifts of healings are not manifested for the individual who is ministering, they are for the benefit of the people.

Now that double-talk basically means that somebody could have faith for somebody else's healing but not enough faith for their own healing. And so, sometimes without faith for their own healing they die, while they have enough faith for other people's healings who live. She goes on to say,

Over the years I have seen various manifestations of the gifts of healing in my own ministry, but I have always had to use my own faith in God's word for my healing. There have been times that I have been attacked with illness in my body but as I ministered many were healed even though I did not feel well. I had to receive my healing through faith and acting on God's word.

Thus, she astonishingly concludes that if a Faith Healer gets sick, it is because his or her personal faith is somehow deficient when applied to his or herself. Now, to take that a step further, you must understand that these people go so far as to say, "That even Jesus Himself sometimes did not have the faith required for people to be healed."

Perspectives on Faith Healing often seem as varied as the number of Faith Healers around. Some say that God wants to heal all sickness, others come close to conceding that God's purposes may sometimes be fulfilled in our illness and infirmity. Some equate sickness with sin; others stop short of that, but still find it hard to explain why spiritually strong people get sick. Some people just "flat out" blame the devil, and they think if they can tie the devil up in a knot and send him off to Tibet or something [then] everybody will get well.

Some claim to have the "Gifts of Healing;" others say they have no unusual healing ability, they simply are used of God to show people the way of faith. A lot of people used to say they had the "Gift of Healing" but the chicanery they were using has for so many years been exposed that nobody today can get away with that stuff anymore. So now they just claim they don't have the "Gift of Healing," they just sort of pray and have faith and God does what He wants. Some will say they heal with a physical touch; some will say you heal through anointing with oil; others say they can speak forth a healing, that they can speak it into existence; some people say they can only pray for a healing, and so forth and so on. And there are healers who just keep changing from one approach to another as the chicanery and the charlatanism of the healing movement becomes exposed and they have to change their methodology.

Always a Faith Healer, the well known Oral Roberts used to claim that he could heal. He claimed great powers of healing; he no longer claims that. Oral Roberts claimed God had called him, in fact, to build a massive hospital. And He said this massive hospital would blend conventional medicine with Faith Healing. If you visit the city of Tulsa, as I did this summer, you are absolutely astonished at this facility. It is mind boggling to see a sixty story building rising out of a weed patch outside Tulsa, Oklahoma, and next to it a thirty story building rising as well, now completely vacant and most of it unfinished on the inside. In the face of huge financial losses apparently God changed His mind and declared that the whole thing should be closed down. It is a monument to the unfulfilled promises of Faith Healing. Nonetheless,

in spite of these bizarre claims that never come to pass, Faith Healing and the Charismatic movement keep growing.

Charles Fox Pharham (sp.) who is the father of the contemporary Pentecostal movement, came to the conviction originally (this is way back at the turn of the century when the Charismatic movement was then known as Pentecostalism and just starting) he claimed that God desired all believers to have complete healing and he developed that into an entire Pentecostal system, and then it began to flow through the leaders. Amy Simple McPherson (who founded the Foursquare Church), Angelus Temple (sp.), E. W. Kenyon, William Brannom (sp.), Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland, Fredrick Price, Jerry Seville (sp.), Charles Capps (sp.), Norval Hayes, Robert Tilton, Benny Hinn, Larry Lee, and on and on it goes. They have all headlined their public meetings with healing.

There are even Catholic Charismatics such as Father John Bertilucci (sp.), and Francis McNutt (sp.) who have followed suit seeing that the Charismatic healing emphasis is a natural extension of Roman Catholic tradition. And then in the last phase of this so called "The Third Wave" in which we talked about leaders like John Wimber and others, Paul Cane (sp.) and the Kansas City Prophets, et al., have made healing a central element in their repertoire. The claims and methods of these Faith Healers range frankly from the eccentric to the grotesque. A few years ago I received--I receive everything in the mail; if they don't send it to me, somebody who wants me to see it does. And I have received bottles of healing oil and healing water and all kinds of things--but I received a miracle prayer cloth, and in it the message said, and I am quoting,

Take this special miracle prayer cloth and put it under your pillow and sleep on it tonight. Or you may want to place it on your body or on a loved one. Use it as a release point wherever you hurt. First thing in the morning send it back to me in the "green" envelope. Do not keep this prayer cloth, return it to me. I will take it, pray over it all night. Miracle power will flow like a river. God has something better for you, a special miracle to meet your needs.

Now, these are the kinds of things that go on all the time. And of course in the "green" envelope you not only send the cloth but you send some "green" money as well. Green being a good reminder of what color they would like to see. Interestingly enough, the sender of the prayer cloth feels he has biblical support for doing this. While Paul was in Ephesus, you remember God performed extraordinary miracles through him, and according to Acts 19, it says, "Handkerchiefs or aprons were carried from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them." And as we have been seeing in the series, however, Paul and the other apostles had been given unique power, and we talked about Apostolic Power as unique power; certainly nothing in the New Testament suggests that anybody could send out handkerchiefs and they are going to produce miracles.

Kenneth Hagan (sp.) tells of one Faith Healer he heard of who used a method that I have never personally witnessed. Kenneth Hagen (sp.) writes,

He'd always spit on them, every single one of them. He'd spit in his hand and rub it on them. That's the

way he ministered. If there was something wrong with your head, he'd spit in his hand and rub it on your forehead. If you had stomach trouble, he'd spit in his hand and rub it on your clothes and on your stomach. If you had something wrong with your knee, he'd spit in his hand and rub it on your knee. And all the people would get healed.

Other gimmicks, not quite that uncouth, but every bit as outlandish, also can be visualized everyday as you watch your television set. Some ask for "Seed Faith" money. Oral Roberts often says that if you donate money to him, that is in effect a down payment on your own personal healing. Robert Tilton regularly devises simple ploys; [he] pledges special healings and financial miracles to people who send him money; the larger the gift, the better the miracle. "It's in direct proportion to how much money you send," he says. Pat Robertson will peer into the camera and as if he can see into people's living rooms describe people who are being healed that very moment. Benny Hinn recently healed fellow Faith Healer and Talk Show Host Paul Crouch (sp.). He healed him on the live broadcast of the Trinity Network. After Hinn had released his anointing to a roomful of people, Crouch step forward to testify that he had been miraculously cured of a persistent ringing in the ears he had been suffering from for years. And on and on it goes, this list of fantastic claims, incredible stories of healings grow at a frantic pace, but real evidence of genuine miracles is conspicuously absent.

And everywhere you go people are asking questions about this. From all sides comes confusion, questions, contradictions. Now as we study the Scripture, we find there are three categories of spiritual gifts, if we want to call them that. First would be the category we could say are gifted men like apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors. These are the men themselves given as gifts from Christ to the Church. And then we could say there are the permanent edifying gifts and the temporary sign gifts (the other two categories). Permanent edifying gifts would be gifts related to knowledge, and wisdom, and preaching, and teaching, and exhortation, and faith, and discernment, and showing mercy, and giving, and administration, and helps, and those things that have an ongoing ministry in the Church.

And then there are those temporary sign gifts, in other words, divine enablements given by the Holy Spirit for a temporary period of time as a sign for a very special purpose. These are listed for us in Scripture; they are miracles, healings, tongues (or languages), and the interpretation or translation of those languages.

Now, we have noted in our study that such sign gifts had a unique purpose: very simple--they were to identify the authentic spokesman for God. First of all, Jesus did miracles. Jesus cast out demons. He did miracles that fall into three categories: Miracles of Physical Healing; Miracles of Demonic Deliverance; and Miracles of Natural Phenomena, like walking on water, or stilling the sea, feeding the people by multiplying bread and fish. And those miracles were to demonstrate to people that Jesus was not a mere man, but that He was the Messiah of God. It should be very clear to everyone who saw Him that this was not a man, because no man could do what He did.

And so Christ had unique capability to do supernatural things in order to draw attention to the fact that He was unique. In fact, you need to remember that up until the time of Jesus Christ, there was nobody who could just go around healing people. There were some healings in the Old Testament, and there were

some miracles of nature, and there were some powerful exhibitions of God's supernatural work: in creation, and the flood, and many other supernatural powerful things; but as far as a miracle, which is a subcategory of the supernatural. . .sometimes people say, "Well, you people always say there are only three eras of miracles," (and that would be: the Time of Moses; and then Elijah and Elisha; and then Christ and the Apostles, and those are the only three periods of miracles). And then they will say, "Well, that's not true, because creation was miracle, and the flood was a miracle," and they will go right on through, "Jacob wrestled with an angel and that was a miracle, and God was always doing supernatural things." But they fail to make the clear distinction that "miracle" is a technical term: it is a subcategory for the supernatural.

God is always acting in a supernatural way, even today. Every time someone is saved that is a supernatural work. But "miracle" is a technical term to describe an act of God which He does through a human agency, and they are very rare. And even when you go back into the Old Testament and you find miracles where God acts through a human instrumentation to authenticate his messenger and the message, they are rare and nothing like the healing ministry of Jesus. No one ever just roamed everywhere, healing everybody.

So what you have in the case of Jesus [is something] you have never seen before. Nothing like this has ever happened before in the history of the world. And so this is a very unique thing. And to assume that it never happened before (to know that by Old Testament revelation) and it happened at the time of Christ, uniquely, and then it faded out in the end of the New Testament era, and now for some strange reason it has all come back at the same level as once it did and we are supposed to have this massive kind of healing going on as it did in the day of Christ, is to demonstrate an imbalanced and an unsound perspective of the purpose of the miracle ministry of Jesus. It was to authenticate His Messiahship, and it is therefore irreproducible and unrepeatable.

And so Jesus did unique things which were unique to His own ministry. Now, it is true that Jesus passed on to the Apostles power in two of the three categories. Remember now, He healed diseases, He had power over demons, and He did miracles of nature (natural phenomenon). The first two he gave the Apostles. They never did any miracles of nature. But "Peter," you say, "Walked on water!" Yes, but that was a miracle Christ was performing and that occurred only in His presence. They never did anything like "Feed the 5,000" or "Walk on water" after that, or "Still a storm" or anything like that. The only two things they were given power to do were "cast out demons and heal the sick (including raising the dead)."

But in their case, again, these were to point to them as the messengers of God. There was no printed New Testament and it was very essential that among all of the people who were saying that they spoke for God somebody be able to tell who was real, and you could tell because they had power over demons and power over disease. And so they were given that ability to do those things. And the Apostles could do them, and those closely associated with the Apostles could do them.

Go back into Matthew 10:1, "Having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out," (and that by the way is the Gift of Miracles: miracle is "dunamis (Greek)" power, power over the forces of demons) "and He gave them the power to heal every kind of

disease and every kind of sickness." And that was granted to the Twelve. Later on you find out that that group was expanded and it included the Seventy. Remember when He sent the Seventy, two-by-two and gave them the same power? So it was a very small group. "These were the signs," says Paul, of a true Apostle. "Signs and wonders and miracles," 2 Corinthians 12:12. They were limited in scope--only casting out demons and healing diseases, and they were limited in terms of who received them--only the Apostles and the Seventy commissioned directly by Jesus, those who worked alongside the Apostles. It never went beyond that.

It never became common for anybody and everybody in the Church to do this. There is no indication that the evangelists, that the prophets (with a few exceptions: Barnabas, Philip, Stephen, and those very early men), never an indication that teaching pastors could do this, and certainly no indication that members of the Church, the Body of Christ, could do this. These were unique apostolic gifts. When you study the epistles of Paul--and Paul is very clear about the fact that if you have problems with Satan and demons you don't find somebody who can chase them away: you put on your armor. Right? "We have spiritual weapons to battle against those forces," he said.

Now if false teachers want credibility it is very obvious that they can sure draw a crowd and gain credibility if they can heal. And so that is always a kind of ploy that is used by false teachers--it has been so in history, whether you are talking about tribal witch doctors in Shamanism, in Animism, and in Paganism, or whether you are talking about Occultic kinds of healings, or New Age kind of mind healings, or whether you are talking about the charlatans and the frauds who parade themselves even as Christian healers. It is a great way to draw a crowd. Why? Because the number one human anxiety is illness and death.

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden disease has been a terrible reality, and for millennia the search for cures to alleviate illness and suffering has consumed mankind. And I will tell you that if I could choose one gift, if God would give me one gift that I don't have and I could ask Him for it and get it, I would ask Him for the gift of healing. I mean, if it was available to me. Can you imagine what you could accomplish with it? There are many occasions when I have wished that I could heal. I have stood in a room in a hospital watching a precious child die of Leukemia while the parents wept. I prayed with a dear friend as inoperable cancer ate at his insides. I have stood by helplessly as a young person fought for life in an intensive care unit, the result of a motorcycle or an automobile accident. I have seen teenagers crushed through those kinds of things. I have watched their parents in agony.

I have seen people in the hospital on the edge of death with a gunshot wound. I have watched people lie comatose while machines try to keep their vital signs alive, at least on a screen, if not in reality. I watched a close friend weaken and die after an unsuccessful heart transplant. I have seen friends in terrible pain from surgery. I know people who are permanently disabled with sickness and injury. I see babies born with heart breaking deformities. I have helped people learn to cope with amputations and other tragic losses. I have been there when a mother was holding to her arms, in the bedroom, a dead baby who had died of "crib death."

If I could wish for anything, I could certainly wish that I could do that--heal all those people. Think how thrilling it would be. Think how rewarding it would be to have that gift. Think of what it would be like to go into a hospital among the sick and the dying, walk up and down the hall and touch people and heal them like Jesus did. Wouldn't it be wonderful to go into the Cancer Ward and the Heart Disease Ward and the Aids Ward, and all the other places and just heal everybody. And somewhere along the line you want to ask these Charismatic healers why they don't assemble all of themselves and go down to that place and let's see if they have the power to heal! Opportunities to heal the sick are unlimited. And if, as Charismatics claim, such miracles are "Signs and Wonders," (listen carefully, they say this) if they are "Signs and Wonders" designed to convince unbelievers that the gospel is true, then wouldn't that be the way to really convince them?

But strangely, the healers rarely, if ever, come out of their tents, rarely ever come out of their buildings, rarely ever come out of their television studios. I have never seen them in a hospital. I have never seen them walking down a ward with a camera following them. They always seem to exercise their gift in an environment in which they totally control, staged their way, run according to their schedule. Why don't we see them moving out?

Paul Kane (sp.) with whom I met recently, personally, who is sort of the main prophet in this new movement, has prophetically seen this, and I quote one writing about him,

Kane describes his vision of an army of children that will parade down the streets healing whole hospital wards. He foresees news broadcasts where the "Anchors" report no bad news because everyone is in sports arenas hearing the gospel. Over a billion will be saved, the dead will be raised, limbs will be restored, those with handicaps will jump from their wheelchairs and crutches will be cast aside, and those in the stadiums will go for days without food or water and never notice.

Now I don't know what kind of a world that is or how they are going to make it happen but I think it is time to start if they have that ability. Is this happening? No, because those who claim to have the gift of healing and the power of healing, and claim to be able to tap into that power really don't have it. The gift of healing was a temporary sign gift for the authenticating of those who wrote the Scripture and those who preached the message in that first century. And once the Scripture was completed and that authenticity was established, the gift of healing ceased. It is not anything new to claim it. The original claimants were the Roman Catholics.

If you read some of Roman Catholic history you will be amazed probably. They boasted of healing people with the bones of John the Baptist, healing people with the bones of Peter, healing people with pieces of the cross (and somebody said, "There are enough pieces of the cross around to build a two-story building!"). They have said that they, "Have healed people with the vials of Mary's breast milk." There is a place that you know about in France called Lourdes, a Catholic shrine that has supposedly been the sight of countless miraculous healings. I have been to the largest Catholic cathedral in the Western Hemisphere in Montreal, San Joseph, where people climb 450 stairs on their knees and they go in and they kiss a little box that has the heart of a little friar in it, and all along the walls and everywhere are crutches, all over the place. Supposedly countless tens of thousands have been healed there. And now in

Metajorie (sp.) in Yugoslavia (you have been reading about it) more than 50,000,000 people have gone in less than a decade. Why? They are in search of a miracle from the virgin Mary who appeared in 1981 to six little children. If you read carefully about that it is bizarre.

It is very much like the occultic kind of healings you hear about in pagan parts of the world. You have the oriental psychic healers who say they can do bloodless surgery. They wave their hands over afflicted organs and say incantations and claim people are cured. Witch Doctors, Shamans, claim to raise the dead. Occultists use Black Magic and Lying Wonders to do their thing. Mary Baker Eddy, [who] you remember founded Christian Science, claimed to have healed people through telepathy. And she had buried with her in her casket a telephone because she was going to come to life and call somebody and tell them to come and get her. You see Satan has always captivated people's hearts through the promise of healing. Even today the people who promised that "Health, Wealth, Prosperity Gospel" are hooking people on this tremendous human desire for physical healing and the fear of disease and death.

This goes on and on and on. One pastor on a popular Charismatic television show explained that his gift of healing works this way, quote,

In the morning services the Lord tells me what healings are available. The Lord will say, "I have got three cancers available, I have got one bad back, I have got two headache healings." I announce that to the congregation and tell them that anyone who comes at night, with faith, can claim those that are available for that evening.

Now if you take a closer look at these healings you will find some very interesting things. The only documented cases that you can find, the only actually documented cases you can find, are cases of people who didn't get healed. The cases of supposed people who do get healed, you can't find any documentation. One of the most telling studies of this was done by a medical doctor by the name of William Nolan who decided that he would look into the healing ministry of really the prototype of all of it, Kathryn Kuhlman (sp.) when she was still going strong before her death. And he wrote a book after studying her, called "Healing, a doctor in search of a miracle." And he went beyond Kathryn Kuhlman, but the major section of interest to me was the section on Kathryn Kuhlman. And he made the point in his book that Miss Kuhlman did not understand psychogenic disease. She did not understand, that is, disease related to the mind. In simple terms a functional disease might be a sore arm. An organic disease would be a withered arm or no arm at all.

Now Katherine would heal a sore arm but not give somebody one who didn't have one. A psychogenic disease would be thinking your arm was sore and Kathryn could make you think that your arm wasn't sore. Nolan wrote,

Search the literature as I have and you will find no documented cures, by healers, of gall stones, heart disease, cancer, or any other serious organic disease. Certainly you will find patients temporarily relieved of their upset stomach, their chest pain, their breathing problems. You will find healers and believers who will interpret this interruption of symptoms as evidence that the disease is cured. But when you track the

patient down and find out what happened later you will always find the cure to have been purely symptomatic and transient. The underlying disease remains.

I remember one of A. A. Allen's cures; a man threw away his crutches and a horrible result came from it, and he was sued by a family for the severe injury that occurred to that man, when under the emotion of the moment, he was sort of able to prop himself momentarily and brought great harm to himself. When faith healers try to treat serious organic diseases they are very often responsible for very serious anguish and unhappiness, and sometimes even life threatening things. Dr. Nolan had Miss Kuhlman herself send him a list of the cancer victims she had seen cured, and this is what the doctor discovered,

I wrote to all the cancer victims on her list and the only one who offered cooperation was a man who claimed that he had been cured of cancer by Miss Kuhlman. He sent me a complete report of his case. He had prostatitis cancer which is frequently responsive to hormone therapy, if it spreads it is also highly responsive to radiation therapy. This man had had that and he had also had extensive treatment with surgery, radiation, and hormones. He had also dealt with Kathryn Kuhlman. He chose to attribute his cure or remission, as the case may be, to Miss Kuhlman. But anyone who read his report, layman or doctor, would see immediately that it is impossible to tell which kind of treatment had actually done most to prolong his life. If Miss Kuhlman had to rely on this case to prove the Holy Spirit cured cancer through her, she would be in very desperate straits.

Dr. Nolan did further work on 82 cases of Kathryn Kuhlman's healings using names that she herself supplied. His conclusion at the end of the entire investigation was that not one of the so called healings was legitimate--not one!

More recently, a very interesting man by the name of James Randy--Have you heard that? He's called the "Amazing Randy" (he gave himself that name). He is a professional magician. As a professional magician he has written a book in which he examines the claims of "faith healers." Why? Because he knows all the gimmicks. He is the man who exposed television evangelist Peter Poppoff's (sp.) fakery in 1986, on the "Tonight Show." You remember that Peter Poppoff (sp.) was one of the healers that claimed to get "words of knowledge." He would stand there and he would say, "Jesus is telling me this about you." And the truth was he had a little earphone and his wife was giving him all this information because everybody who came to the meeting had to fill out a card. And I don't know if you know about how that works but healers throughout the years have always had the "preservice" meeting, when everybody who wants to be cured and get in the "healing line" fills out a very full card. And there is a very simple way, by staggering the cards, that the guy can be holding up a card to his head and telling you all you need to know about yourself, to convince you that this man speaks for God. In the case of Peter Poppoff (sp.) he was repeating information his wife was putting in his ear, from the "crib sheets" assembled in the "pre-meeting."

Now the "Amazing Randy" is really not so amazing, he's just a magician. But he is openly antagonistic to Christianity. His antagonism is fed, I think, continually by what he finds out. But, nevertheless, he seems to have done his investigation thoroughly. He asks scores of "faith healers" to supply him with direct, examinable evidence of true healings. Quote, he said,

I have been willing to accept just one case of a miracle cure, so that I might say in this book that at least on one occasion a miracle occurred. But not one "faith healer" anywhere has given him a single case of medically confirmed healing that couldn't be explained as natural convalescence, psychosomatic improvement or outright fakery.

What is Randy's conclusion? I quote,

Reduced to its basics, "faith healing" today (as it always has been) is simply magic! Though the preachers vehemently deny any connection with the practice, their activities meet all the requirements for the definition; all of the elements are present and the intent is identical.

Well, I don't want to just be ungracious, that's not my intention; but it is very important that you know the truth and that you be warned. And if the Apostle John would even speak the name of Diotrephes just because he loved to have the preeminence in the Church, and that posed a threat, then how important it is for us to identify these people who pose an even more severe threat, as they say they represent the very voice of God and can prove it by the fact they can do miracles.

I had a meeting with a man who is a very bright, a very intelligent, a very academically trained, a very intellectual man who understands the Bible, and he said to me,

The reason that I am in this movement is because one of these prophets stood up in a meeting and looked at me and told me the name of my mother--my mother's maiden name! And not only that he was able to tell me my father's real name, and my father goes by a nickname and I knew that he could only know that by direct revelation.

Now, how utterly gullible can a man be? If I could find a full-fledged, bonifide theologian, first-ranked, teaching in one of the most respected seminaries in the world, and if I could convince him of my being a prophet of God by just finding out the name of his mother and his father's real name, that wouldn't be too tough if that's all it took, especially if I had been plying that kind of trade for years. It's amazing how gullible people are. We hear about these healings, but there is never any evidence. Not one of today's self-styled healers has produced irrefutable proof of the miracles they claimed to have wrought. Many of them are transparently fraudulent, and the healings in many cases aren't healings at all. Many things can occur by the power of suggestion, like people falling over backwards and so forth. But that can do the opposite of healing you as we noted a few weeks ago when we reminded you that one lady fell over in a Benny Hinn meeting and killed the lady she fell on. And now he is being sued.

Now we all know that desperation accompanies disease. Sickness drives people to do frantic, extreme things they normally wouldn't do. People who are clear-minded and balanced become irrational. Remember, Satan knows this. That's why he said in Job 2:4, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." The most desperate, heart-breaking cases involve people who are incurably organically ill. Others aren't really sick at all. You know, if I may be very personal, one of the real joys of our church

is the dear precious people that come here every Sunday in wheelchairs. I can't tell you how many of those people have told me that people have said to them, "If you had enough faith, or if you went to another church, other than Grace Church, you could get out of that wheelchair."

Somebody asked me recently if we get a lot of people here coming out of healing churches? I say, "Yes, we get the people who go and don't get healed--no question about it." What a tragic thing; multitudes go away shattered, disconsolate, feeling they have either failed God or God has failed them. Now, let me say this, people are going to say, "Well, are you saying God doesn't heal?" No, I'm not saying that, if God wants to heal, He can heal. That's completely, obviously within His power, and if it is in his purpose [then] He can heal. He may heal as a result of prayer. He may heal through simple processes, through medical assistance, or he may heal in a way that we can't explain medically. God may speedup the recovery mechanism and restore a person to health in a way that medicine can't even explain. Sometimes He may overrule a medical prognosis and allow someone to recover from a normally debilitating disease. Healings like that may come, He may do them; He may do them in response to prayer, He may do them just because He wants to do them. But the gift of healing, and the ability to heal, and special anointings for healing, and healings that can be claimed and therefore realized, and all the typical "faith healing" technique billed on the idea that God wants everybody well all the time, has no Biblical sanction whatsoever in the Post-Apostolic era.

Now, backing off a minute, if we just said, "Let's look at Jesus, and if anybody is healing today, and if Jesus' healings are the pattern, and if the apostles is the pattern, how did they heal?" And I will simply remind you of it. We will make a comparison and see if today it works like that.

1. Jesus healed with a word or a touch.

That's all it took. He touched, He spoke, they were healed.

2. Jesus healed instantaneously.

Never in all His healings does the Bible say He healed somebody and they started getting better. No, there was never a process, because if there was a process the point wasn't made. Right? Because if there was a process then it could be explained in another way. It was instantaneous. "The Centurion's servant was healed" (I love it), Matthew 8:13, "that very hour." The woman with the bleeding problem--it went away immediately. Jesus healed ten lepers instantaneously. The crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda, immediately became well.

3. Jesus healed totally.

When someone was healed they were totally and completely healed--the only kind of healing Jesus ever did. He didn't partially heal. He healed totally.

4. He healed anybody.

You didn't have to have a long line of people filling out cards. And He certainly didn't have a whole group of people who came into the meeting in wheelchairs and left in wheelchairs (if they had wheelchairs, or crutches, or whatever). Luke 4:40 says, "While the Sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on everyone of them, He was healing them." It's an incredible thing. He healed everybody. He healed everybody instantaneously. He healed everybody totally and He healed everybody with a word. There wasn't some falderal there was just a word!

#### 5. He healed organic disease.

He didn't just go around Palestine healing lower back pain, heart palpitations, headaches, and other things like that. He healed the most obvious organic disease; crippled bent legs, withered hands, blind eyes, paralysis.

#### 6. He raised the dead.

He raised the dead. He came up on a funeral and he raised the dead! You remember that? Here comes the funeral procession; the widow is going to bury her son and Jesus stops the procession, touches the casket and says, "Young man, arise!" and the dead man sat up and began to speak. Now, I will tell you something, people who tout the gift of healing today don't spend a lot of time in funeral processions; the reason is obvious. And you need to note, by the way, that Jesus did virtually all His healings and raising the dead in public before vast crowds of people. Why? Because the gift of healing was real and it was an authenticating gift. He used it to confirm the claim that He was the Son of God in a way that displayed His power and compassion.

Then we ask the question, "How did the disciples or apostles heal? How did they heal? How did the Twelve, and the Seventy, and others who worked with them, like Barnabas, and Philip, and Stephen?" And those are the only ones; it didn't just run rampant through everybody in the Church. But those people who had that gift; how did they heal? How did they do it? Well, the same way; they healed with a word or a touch. We see that in the Book of Acts: they healed instantaneously, immediately. Remember the temple gate with Peter and John? The man immediately went to his feet, started leaping, walking, and praising God. They healed totally, not partial, total. They healed everybody. In fact, people who got under Peter's shadow got healed! They healed organic disease, not just functional, psychosomatic, symptomatic problems, and the apostles even raised the dead. Now, nobody is exhibiting those six traits in a healing ministry today. So if this is supposed to be the recapturing of the Apostolic era it is really "out of sync" with that.

And a final note; according to Scripture, those who possess those abilities to heal could use their gift at will. That's not true of the contemporary healers because they don't have that gift. They play games with people's minds--the power of suggestion. They prey upon people, making them believe things that aren't really true and they use deception. Look at the Apostle Paul, in Philippians 2, he mentions that his good friend Epaphroditus was very sick. Now, Paul had previously displayed the ability to heal, but he doesn't

heal Epaphroditus. It's fair to say that, maybe, that gift was passing out of operation, but it is sure fair to say that the gift of healing was never (listen carefully) intended to keep Christians happy and healthy! In fact, you look through the New Testament and find out how many healings occurred to believers--absolutely rare--Peter's wife mother, Dorcas. [But there were] masses of unbelievers; masses of people who may or may not have believed anything about Christ or the Apostles. But it surely wasn't given to keep everybody in the Church healthy; and yet today it is being portrayed as something that is supposed to be done for believers to keep them healthy, to show them that in the atonement is their healing: totally foreign to Scripture.

Second Timothy 4:20, Paul mentioned he that he left Trophimus sick at Miletus; now, why leave a good friend sick? Why did he leave his Christian friend sick? Why didn't he heal him? Well, maybe he didn't have that ability as the time passed on out of the Apostolic era, but for sure he recognized that healing was not something you run around doing for your Christian friends. It was never intended as a permanent way to keep the Church healthy; yet today Charismatics teach that God wants every Christian well all the time. If that is true, then why did He let them get sick to start with? It seems a basic question. God didn't give you an HMO in your salvation, a sort of supernatural HMO that works automatically. God heals when He wants and when He wishes, but that's up to Him.

Has God promised to heal everybody who has faith? He doesn't promise that He will always heal, but I think the Christian can look to heaven for healing. Now, I want to turn the table a little bit as I close in the next couple of minutes. I think that we can go to the Lord for healing. I think that we can pray to Him for deliverance from disease, and I do believe that there are times when God touches us. Sometimes He heals through medicine, sometimes He heals through surgery, sometimes He heals through natural process working in the body. The body is an amazing self-healing thing. And sometimes He may just heal supernaturally because it is His will, and we can look to heaven for that. We can cry out to God in our sickness and ask for His healing. I would suggest that there are three reasons why we could expect that God might heal:

1. He might heal because of His person.

You remember his Old Testament name, that wonderful name: it's really Yahweh Rapecca (sp.)--The Lord that Heals. God heals because of His person. "I the Lord am your healer," He told the Israelites. And the very fact that when Jesus came into the world He could have done a lot of different miracles. I mean if He wanted to convince people about His Messiahship He could have just flown around, and He could have said, "See, I can do this, and who else can do this?" Or He could have jumped a building at a single bound, or flown faster than a speeding bullet, or He could have put on a "Superman Show" and everybody would have been in awe of that. But why did he choose to heal people? Because He was demonstrating His compassion, and a compassionate God has a heart to heal. And I think that we have experienced that at times in our life; God raises up someone from sickness.

2. God heals because of His promise.

He says, "Whatever we ask in His name, believing and according to His will, He will do it." And there must be times when He will do that. There is certainly a description in James 5 of a broken, shattered, devastated person, who goes in for prayer. The elders gather around that individual and while the pain of that situation is spiritual it has tremendous physical ramifications, and through prayer that person is restored. "The effectual fervent prayer avails much." If in God's will He has designed that [then] He will do that because of His promise.

### 3. God heals because that is His pattern.

It is true that in the atonement God bore our diseases, Matthew 8 says it. Matthew 8 says, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases." Now, we have already discussed 1 Peter 2:24 and I won't do it again; it doesn't mean that healing for every sickness is in the atonement for now! But healing for every sickness is in the atonement for someday--isn't it? And someday He will remove all of those diseases. Ultimately, eternally we will be delivered from sickness and infirmity. And it may just be that He would chose because of that pattern of providing a salvation that ultimately delivers us from bodily infirmity when we get a glorified body, that maybe He will give us a taste of "Glory Divine."

God may heal. That poses the final question, "Should a Christian go to the doctor?" And we come all the way back to Hobart Freeman again. We would never advocate such idiocy. You say, "Well, does the Bible say anything about this?" Sure, read Isaiah 38. Not now. I knew that you would do that; your heads just go right down--that's good. Pavlov's dogs! Just instant response. That's not derogatory, by the way, that's trained response. In Isaiah 38, King Hezekiah was deathly ill, and you remember the king was crying, and he was crying tears, and then he was crying to the Lord, and God answered his request. And he says this, "Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover." Isn't that good? That's what we used to call a poultice. Right? Now, God is saying, "Do the medical thing." In Matthew 9:12, Jesus confirmed the same idea when He said this, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick." And so the Lord has given us that instruction also.

Now, in closing, I simply say, I want to reiterate that I believe that God can heal. God can do anything He wants to do. I do not believe the gift of healing is for today because it was to authenticate the Biblical message and messenger. That is in place; it needs no more authentication then the authentication given to it by the Spirit of God to the heart of the reader. But I do believe that God may in His grace chose to heal, and we have every right to pray for that, and at the same time seek the finest medical help that we can because to Lord desires us to do that as well.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for letting us cover all of this tonight. Our minds are full of these considerations. Lord, we would not at all be ungracious to the many people who are victims of these kinds of things. And even Lord, there may be some in these movements who are well meaning and well intentioned, who for some reason or other believe that these things really are happening.

Lord, we would pray for those who have a true and a pure intention, and who are genuinely believing that this is true, that You would show them the truth of Your word and help them to see the light. And then

Lord, for those who are just playing with the hearts and minds and the wallets of people, that you would cause them to be struck with the truth of what they are doing. To be literally stopped in their tracks by the fear of God, as they would misrepresent You.

Lord, we pray for Your Church to be discerning, clear minded. And then Lord, even as we close tonight, we would remember to pray for those in our congregation who have physical illness, disability, physical pain and suffering, some with even the diagnosis of a fatal disease, that Lord, You would be gracious to them. We know that You are going to heal them someday, and if it would suit Your glorious purpose and bring honor to the name of Jesus Christ, we would ask that you heal them now; that You might receive glory for that. But if not, that You might give them the grace to acknowledge Your perfect will. And help us to know Lord that it is not through these kinds of miraculous things that people are going to believe the truth. It is through hearing about Jesus Christ and reading the Scripture and having it presented to them, not only on the page but through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, that they shall come to the truth. And so may we faithfully proclaim this word, which can authenticate itself by the Holy Spirit to the heart of one who hears.

Thank You again Father for the clear word that You do care and that there is a day of healing coming for us all. We rejoice in anticipation of it, in Christ's name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-61, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 10. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 10, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 10**

### ***Speaking in Tongues***

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Tonight, in one sense I have a difficult, impossible task; and that is to cover a subject that needs to be covered thoughtfully and carefully. In another sense, while very challenging and almost impossible to fully accomplish, I welcome the opportunity to share with you some insights that will help you to be discerning as you look at a very important issue in the Charismatic movement today; and that is this matter of "Speaking in Tongues."

This is at the very heart of the Charismatic movement; one of their distinctives. There is no question in my mind that if you were to boil down the Charismatic movement as to its basic, several ingredients, one of them would be the affirmation that speaking in tongues is a gift for today. Not only a gift for today, but a gift to be sought by every Christian who wants the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the blessing of God. It is so much a part of the fabric of the Charismatic movement that it is one of the primary things that they endeavor to teach the children in that movement.

Someone sent me a sample of some Charismatic Sunday School literature which is designed specifically to teach Kindergarten children how to speak in tongues. It's titled, "I've Been Filled with the Holy Spirit," and it is an eight paged coloring book. One page has a caricature of a smiling weight lifter with a T-shirt

and it says, "Spiritman", and under him is printed 1 Corinthians 14:4, "He that speaks in an unknown tongue builds himself up." Another page features a little boy who looks something like (some of you will remember) Howdy Doody, something like that, with his hands lifted up, and a dotted outline pictures where his lungs would be. This evidently represents his spirit. Inside the lung shaped diagram is printed this, "Bal Li Ode Da Ma Ta Las Si Ta No Ma," (sp.). A cartoon styled balloon then comes out his mouth and repeats the words, "Bal Li Ode Da Ma Ta Las Si Ta No Ma," (sp.). A brain-shaped cloud is drawn in his head with a large question mark in the cloud.

Do you understand the picture? These gibberish words are in the Spirit and they come out of his mouth, but a question mark is in his brain. This is how they plant in a Kindergarten child the idea that tongues goes from the Spirit to the mouth, without ever going through the brain, that it is some kind of mystical, noncognitive experience that somehow bypasses the brain. And under that picture is 1 Corinthians 14:14, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful." In both cases they have misrepresented the intention of those verses. The first verse they assume "speaking in an unknown tongue" builds someone up, when in fact, Paul was saying it in a negative sense. It puffs your ego, or it, at best (if you do it in private) would benefit you, which would be selfish and contrary to any proper use of spiritual gifts. And the second one, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, and my understanding is unfruitful," is a way to say, "Don't do that, because what's the point in having an unfruitful understanding?"

And yet, as early as Kindergarten, people are learning these things which are in error. This is the typical Charismatic perspective, by the way. The gift of tongues is viewed as a holy, mystical ability that somehow operates in a person's spirit and comes out the mouth and bypasses the mind. And many Charismatics are even told they have to purposefully switch off their mind to enable the gift to function. That's pretty much the pattern. I've sat in on a number of sessions where people were endeavoring to teach someone how to speak in tongues, and they always follow that same format. Usually they say something like this, "Don't think of anything. Try to empty your mind of any conscious thought."

Charles and Francis Hunter, who travel all across the world in healing explosion meetings, have as a part of their curriculum the seminars in which they teach people how to speak in tongues. They have as many as 50,000 people in some of their meetings. Charles Hunter tells people, and I quote,

When you pray with your spirit you do not think of the sounds of the language. Just trust God, but make the sounds when I tell you to. In just a moment, when I tell you, begin loving and praising God by speaking forth a lot of different syllable sounds. At first make the sounds rapidly so you won't try to think as you do in speaking your natural language. Make the sounds loudly at first so you can easily hear what you are saying.

That's an interesting contradiction! Hunter doesn't explain what point there is in hearing what you are saying since your mind isn't engaged anyway. But he continually reminds his audience [that] they are not supposed to be thinking, quote, he says, "The reason some of you don't speak fluently, is that you try to think of the sounds. So when we pray this prayer and you start speaking in your heavenly language--don't

try to think!" Later he adds, "You don't even have to think in order to pray in the Spirit!"

Arthur Johnson, in his excellent expose of mysticism, entitled, "Faith Misguided", a very good book, calls the Charismatic movement, "the zenith of mysticism." And he does so with good reason, because there is the desire, in some cases and through some experiences, to switch off the mind and disconnect yourself from what is rational, and reasonable, and logical. We've already noted that earlier in our study and I won't go back and belabor the point, but that is one of the primary characteristics of "Pagan, Mystery Religions," one of the primary characteristics of the Babylonian mystery religions that have found their way into all kinds of religious fabric, through the history of the world. Nearly all the teachings, distinctive to the Charismatic movement, are unadulterated Mysticism. And nothing illustrates that more perfectly than the way Charismatics themselves depict the gift of tongues.

They usually describe this gift of speaking these ecstatic syllables that have no meaning, as a sort of ecstatic experience that has no equal. They would tell us that it's a way to experience an emotion and a feeling that is beyond anything else that you will ever experience. One author quotes Robert Morris,

For me, the gift of tongues turned out to be the gift of praise. As I used the unknown language, which God had given me, I felt rising in me the love, the awe, the adoration, pure and uncontingent, that I had not been able to achieve in thought out prayer.

In other words, "I got more out of prayer I couldn't understand, than I did out of prayer that I could understand!"

A newspaper article on tongues quoted the Reverend Bill L. Williams of San Jose, and he said this,

It involves you with someone you are deeply in love with and devoted to. We don't understand the verbiage, but we know we are in communication.

If I could just interrupt and ask you to try that sometime on someone you love very dearly, and see how effective it is in communication. You could probably judge that statement accurately. He went on to say,

That awareness is beyond emotion, beyond intellect, it transcends human understanding. It is the heart of man speaking to the heart of God. It is deep inner heart understanding. It comes as supernatural utterances bringing intimacy with God.

Now, remember, all of this is occurring with absolutely no understanding of what you are saying. You have no comprehension of what it is you're saying, and yet it is supposed to bring you into the deep understanding and intimate communion with God. The article also quoted the Reverend Billy Martin of Farmington, New Mexico, who said, "It's a joyous, glorious, wonderful experience." Reverend Darlene Miller of Knoxville, Tennessee said, "It's like the sweetness of peaches that you can't know until you taste it yourself. There is nothing ever to compare with that taste." And other of those people who have that experience might echo sentiments similar to those. And I am just quoting you what they themselves

say.

And you might ask the question, "What then is wrong with such an experience?" Well, on the one hand, there really isn't anything particularly evil or immoral about it if you just disassociate it from the Bible and disassociate it from Christianity, and if you get some pleasure out of standing in a corner all by yourself or sitting in your room alone and talking gibberish to yourself and that does something for you, then I suppose in and of itself, from a psychological standpoint, that it's not a moral issue--it may be harmless. If something makes you feel good or makes you feel somehow better in control of your life, or like you've had some warm experience, so be it. But, don't call it intimacy with God. Don't say it makes you spiritually stronger, don't say it makes you delirious with spiritual joy.

And then ask yourself the question, "Could I, through this means be deceived, could this be dangerous?" And the answer to that question has to be yes. A man whom I knew and respected greatly, now with the Lord, George Gardner, who was pastor up in Grand Rapids, who wrote a very excellent book on this subject, was a former "tongue speaker" who left the Pentecostal movement. And he poignantly described the danger of surrendering one's mind and abandoning control of one's self for the sake of the euphoria of the tongues experience. He said it is a very dangerous thing and this is what he wrote in his own words,

The enemy of the soul is ever ready to take advantage of an out-of-

control situation, and thousands of Christians can testify with regret to the end results. Such experiences not only give Satan an opening he is quick to exploit, they can be physiologically damaging to the individual. Charismatic writers are constantly warning tongue speakers that they will suffer a "letdown." This is ascribed to the Devil and the reader is urged to get refilled as soon as possible. So the seeker for experience goes back through the ritual again and again, but begins to discover something: ecstatic experience, like drug addiction requires larger and larger doses to satisfy.

Sometimes the bizarre is introduced. I've seen people run around a room until they were exhausted. I've seen people climb tent poles, laugh hysterically, go into trances for days, and do other weird things, as the "high" sought becomes more elusive. Eventually there is a crisis and a decision is made; he will sit on the back seats and be a spectator, fake it, or go on in the hope that everything will eventually be as it was. The most tragic decision is to quit and in the quitting abandon all things spiritual as fraudulent. The spectators are frustrated, the fakers suffer guilt, the hoping are pitiable, and the quitters are a tragedy. No, such movements are not harmless!

The first time a person speaks in tongues there is usually a euphoria because there have been so many people trying to get them to do that, that when they finally do that, there is a tremendous sense that they have arrived spiritually. And so psychologically there is a great sense of release and relief, and then there is immediately the diminishing return. Many who speak in tongues will understand the tensions that Gardner has described. He is not the only tongue speaker, by the way, to turn against the practice and expose its dangers.

A man by the name of Wayne Robinson, who was once editor-in-chief of the publications of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, was an enthusiastic tongues speaker, and he wrote a book, "I Once Spoke in Tongues" and in it he says this,

In the past few years, I have become more and more convinced that the test, not only of tongues, but of any religious experience cannot be limited to the logic and truthfulness supporting it. There is also the essential question, "What does it do in one's life?" More specifically, does it turn a person inward to self concern and selfish interests, or does it open him up to others and their needs. I know people who testify that speaking in tongues has been the great liberating experience of their lives, but juxtaposed with them are the great many others for whom speaking in tongues has been an excuse to withdrawal from confronting the realities of a suffering and divided world. For some, tongues has been the greatest thing ever to happen, others have seen it disrupt churches, destroy careers, and rupture personal relationships.

Another former Charismatic writes,

To say that speaking in tongues is a harmless practice, and is all right for those who want to, is an unwise position when information to the contrary is evident. Speaking in tongues is addictive. The misunderstanding of the issue of tongues and the habit, plus the psychic high it brings, plus the stimulation of the flesh, equals a practice hard to let go of. But to equate much speaking in tongues with advanced spirituality is to reveal one's misunderstanding of Bible truth, and to reveal one's willingness to be satisfied with a deceptive and dangerous counterfeit.

That's from Ben Bird (sp.) who wrote a book entitled, "The Truth About Speaking in Tongues." There are others who practice tongues and can turn the phenomena on and off mechanically, and without feeling anything emotional. Recently, I knew of a pastor, knew him personally, who spoke in tongues and led his ministry in that direction for many, many years, and has since admitted that it was something he just did. It was nothing spiritual or divine, it was something he just did himself. There are many like that. They have learned how to do it. They can turn it on, turn it off, hone the ability to speak in those familiar sounds that most tongue speakers use, and they do it without passion.

Now, I have just introduced the subject to you and given you a little bit of a feeling for it. I want to go into the Word of God and try to show you some things that you must understand about tongues so that you will have a handle on it from the Biblical perspective. So let's talk first of all about the Biblical gift of tongues; we do know it is in the Bible and we have to deal with that. Now listen very carefully to what I say, because I don't want to lose you and I am going to flow through this fairly quickly.

Tongues are only mentioned in three books in the Bible: Mark (one time in chapter 16:17); Acts (three times, Acts 2, 10, 19); and then in 1 Corinthians.

Those are the only three books of the Bible that mention tongues. Now, earlier in our study you will remember that we looked into Acts, didn't we? And we saw something about this gift of tongues, as it has become known, in the Book of Acts. We discovered that when it occurred in the Book of Acts, it was a

known language (we will say more about that in a few moments). It had a very specific purpose in God's redemptive history. Along with other miraculous events in the Apostolic period it had a very unique purpose. And so we have covered the ground I think fairly well in the Book of Acts, and we saw the unique historical purpose for that gift.

It was a sign that the Spirit of God had come, that God was speaking from heaven His truth. It was also a sign to unbelieving Israel that when they wouldn't listen in the language they could speak, God would now begin in judgment to speak a language they couldn't understand. And so as Paul will point out in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, it was a sign of judgment. It was given as a sign gift on the day of Pentecost. Several other times in the Book of Acts it was given again so that those believers being added to the original Body of Christ would be seen to be participating in the same Body and receiving the same Holy Spirit. So it had a unique historical place in the Book of Acts.

Then it appears in Mark 16:17; it simply mentions tongues as one of the gifts that would be expressed in the time of the apostles' ministry. And again it fits into that unique historic Apostolic time period in which there was miraculous phenomena, signs and wonders, as God pointed to the apostles who were speaking His truth. On the day of Pentecost this sign drew the crowd to which Peter preached the gospel, for example.

That leaves us really with only one epistle in which tongues is even mentioned, out of the historical uniqueness of Acts and Mark 16--we come to the Book of 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14. This is the only epistle where we find anything about this, and Paul wrote for sure 12 and maybe 13 epistles beyond this one, and never in any of them does he even mention this. Only in this very early epistle does any discussion of tongues take place.

Now, Paul wrote these chapters, and you must understand this, to reprove the Corinthians for misusing the gift. It's very difficult out of this passage to get any kind of mandate to speak in tongues, to get any kind of affirmation that this is something to be sought, or something to be elevated, or something to be used, or something that will last, because, what you have here is primarily a corrective given to the Corinthians, who had prostituted the gift of tongues into something pagan that wasn't even representative of the work of the Holy Spirit. And so what he wants to do is correct and restrict the use of tongues.

Now, if we grant, and I think we must, that at the time of the writing of 1 Corinthians the Spirit of God could still use this unique ability, the fact that it was still a gift in that time and that place in the history of the Church--we know that because Paul said, "Don't forbid it." Don't forbid people to speak in tongues, don't eliminate it. There is still, he is saying, a place for this (verse 39 of chapter 14), but, he says you must regulate it carefully; and then if you took the time to study through 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, (and by the way, if you want to read in detail, I've written my commentary on 1 Corinthians which covers every verse, every phrase in this whole section)--but in this section there are some regulations.

The guidelines given were these:

1. Tongues is a sign to unbelievers. It's a sign that God is speaking. It's a sign to unbelievers.
2. If used in the Church it must always be translated, so that it can have the purpose of edifying the believers who don't know what's being said.
3. Never are more than three people to do it, and they are to do it in sequence, not at the same time.
4. There is to be no speaking in tongues unless it is interpreted.
5. Any confusion or any disorder in the assembly is an indication that what is going on did not originate with God--it's a counterfeit; it's a prostitution.
6. Women are never to do it, for they are to remain silent and not to speak in tongues.

And then as he comes to the end of chapter 14, Paul tells them to recognize these regulations as a commandment of the Lord as absolutely imperative: you have no option. In verse 37, he says, "If you think you are a prophet or you think you are spiritual, then you better recognize that what I have just said is the Lord's command!" And a few weeks ago when we were meeting with some of the leaders of the Vineyard, they said, "Are there things in our ministry that you would point out as a violation of Scripture?" And we immediately brought up the fact that having attended a recent meeting where several thousand people were present, the leader of that meeting invited everyone, all at once, all at the same time to begin speaking in tongues. And there was total chaos, confusion, disorder, people pushing chairs back (as we told you before), falling on the floor, stretching out their limbs, falling over, fainting, all of that kind of chaos and confusion. No translation of that was going on. Women were dominant in it, and all of that violates the instruction for the legitimate use of the gift, when it was legitimate in the Corinthian time.

And so there are some very clear restrictions given here. To be honest with you, if those restriction were followed in the contemporary tongue speaking movement, the movement would come to almost a total halt. And again I point out it isn't necessary for God any longer to give supernatural sign gifts to point to those who speak His word since we know who speaks His word. We don't need a sign, we just compare them with the Bible. Once the authority was given then affirming speakers who speak His truth through Signs and Wonders ceased to be necessary. I can tell you in a moment whether someone speaks for God. All I have to do is listen and compare what they say with the Bible.

Now, also there was another component. Tongues in the Corinthian church was chaotic, out of order, confused--way out of its proper place. And not only that, the attitude of the people in using this gift was one of pride, self-centeredness, "look at me," they were putting on a show, they were parading their supposed spirituality and they weren't using their gift for the benefit of others; that's why he writes chapter 13, which is all about love. And he is saying, "In all spiritual gifts the proper motive is love to other people." And he says in verse one of chapter 13, "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and don't have love, I'm nothing but a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal." I don't care if you're talking

human language or angel talk, anything apart from love is noise. It's noise. And then he launches into the magnificent 13th chapter, the classic in all of human literature on love, to point to the fact that the Corinthians had adulterated the gift in its expression, and they had adulterated the purpose and the motive for it because it was something other than love.

Paul says, "I don't care how you talk. I don't care whether you talk in human languages or whether you talk angel talk (and that's hypothetical because every time angels ever speak they speak in the language of men)." But he says, hypothetically, hyperbolically, "I don't care if you talk angel talk, if you are not motivated by love, it's noise, absolute noise." Unfortunately, some of the Charismatic people have taken Paul's statement, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," and they say, "You see, the tongues of men are our normal language, and the tongues of angels are our secret private prayer language." And they believe that the gift of tongues is a private prayer language, a heavenly language known only to God that transcends the mind, as we said earlier. It's celestial speech.

It's interesting to me that if it's celestial speech, and if it's angel talk and comes from God, why is it that somebody has to sit you down and teach you how to do it? There is no warrant in this text for such a view. Paul was simply expressing a hypothetical case, just as in the subsequent verses. He says, "If I have the gift of prophecy, and if I know all mysteries and all knowledge, and have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing." If I could move the earth and didn't have love--what would it matter? "And if I gave away everything to feed the poor, and delivered my body to be burned, and didn't have love, what good would it be?" This is all hyperbole! He's not really suggesting things that are, but he's taking it to its furthest expression. No matter what you did, no matter how great it was, without love it's nothing. And as I said, angels don't ever appear in Scripture talking in anything other than human language. You can compare Luke, chapter 1 and chapter 2 for a good illustration of that.

Nowhere then, and this is very important, nowhere does the Bible teach that the gift of tongues is anything other than "human languages!" And if you have a question about that, all you need to do is to go back to Acts 2. Go back there with me for a moment, verse 4, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages (it's the word language, we'll see that in a minute), as the Holy Spirit was giving them utterance." Notice that they didn't have to learn how to do it. Somebody didn't sit them down in a chair and say, "Empty your mind and start talking in unintelligible syllables" No, the Spirit gave them utterance and they began to speak. Really; and what did they speak? It's very clear, "The multitude came together (verse 6), they were bewildered (they were from everywhere, by the way), they were each hearing them speak in his own language." It wasn't double-talk, it wasn't gibberish, it wasn't angel talk, it wasn't celestial speech, it was just different languages.

"And they were amazed and marveled, saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?'" See Galilee was a kind of a "Hick Town" area. "Hay Seeds" lived up there. Nobody was educated, they certainly didn't learn languages up there. They could barely speak their own language. "Aren't these Galileans? How is it that everybody is hearing them in our own language? The Parthians and the Medes and the Elamites, and the residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and

proselytes, Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our own languages."

This is incredible! It was very clear what the gift was--it was an ability to speak a language you hadn't learned. And in that language they were declaring the wonderful works of God and everybody was hearing them. But the people were saying, "This isn't some human exercise. Something has happened here today that is divine." And so it was a sign that God had come in a marvelous way, and God had poured out His Spirit on this Church, on these 120, and the Church was born, and they all could see that a supernatural event had happened. The Church was born and the unbelieving Jews now were hearing the judgment predicted come to pass. God had through the prophet Isaiah said, "The day is coming when, because you don't hear me when I talk your language, I am going to talk a language you don't understand." And that's a sign of judgment, and after all the judgment was coming wasn't it? They had rejected and crucified their Messiah.

It was a sign that God had done something wonderful, that God had brought the Spirit and the Church was born: Gentiles and Jews all together would come to Christ and form one body; and it was a sign to unbelieving Israel that they were going to be put outside, set aside, and that the God who spoke once to them in a language they could understand, and gave them the oracles and the covenants and the promises in the Hebrew tongue, would now speak in a language they didn't understand as a judgment.

But very clearly it was language. The word in Acts 2 is "glossa" (Gk.) [and it] means language. They were hearing people speak in their own language. That's all, it wasn't some angel talk, some gibberish, some gobbledygook, some nonsense talk. And then it says also they were hearing in their own "dialektos" (Gk.)--dialects. That also we find used in Acts chapter 2. So there were unbelievers present at Pentecost hearing God's message in their own languages and their own local dialects, not ecstatic gibberish.

Now when you come to 1 Corinthians, curiously, the King James Version has chosen to add the word "unknown" (unknown tongue), and some Charismatics have sort of felt that that gave them the right to say they weren't languages. The King James says, "an unknown tongue." You'll notice, if you have a New American Standard [Bible], they took the word "unknown" out. Why? Because it wasn't in the original! They spoke in a tongue. What is it? "glossa" (Gk.) a language.

Whatever the gift is here in the Corinthian Church, it is the same as it was then. This is early in the life of the Church and God was still speaking, and God was still identifying Himself through this miraculous expression of languages that had never been learned by these people, and it was a wondrous thing. And it showed them that God was in their midst and God was speaking. And it was also a continuing sign of judgment on Israel. But it was a language again. The word "unknown" never appears in the Greek text. It was a language.

There is an interesting footnote to that, that you can look through carefully. Notice the plural and singular usages of the word language, and that's helpful. I believe when he uses the singular of "glossa" he's referring to the false gibberish, and when he uses the plural he's referring to languages, because you can't

have plural gibberishes. There aren't kinds of double talk and gobbledygook and gibberish--there's only gibberish. It doesn't have a plural. But that is something you can study in the commentary and examine on your own.

Now, also, you will notice in 1 Corinthians, that Paul insists, verse 13 of chapter 14, that any time someone speaks in a language you must pray that he may interpret. When tongues are spoken in a church someone must interpret. Down in verse 27, "If any one speaks in a language, it should be by two or at most three, and each in sequence and let someone interpret; and if there isn't an interpreter, then stay silent and just pray to God," because it would be selfish, self-centered and have no edification for the Church, plus it wouldn't accomplish anything. Right? Because if I am going to be the instrument of God by which He reveals His presence and I say some things that nobody understands, and nobody translates it, nobody knows whether it was real or legitimate and nobody knows what the message from God was. So it had to be translated for edification and to make the point.

You will also notice there is that word, "interpretation;" it is "hermeneuo" (Gk.), which means translation. All he is saying is, "If somebody speaks a foreign language, make sure he gets translated." That's not so difficult to understand. If someone speaks a foreign language, make sure they get translated. Why? So that everybody is edified. So that everybody can learn. [In] verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 14, he says, "Greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in languages, unless he interprets, so the church may receive edifying."

Now, do you see here, it's never to be done in private. It would be pointless. Wherever in the Bible does it say that you are to speak in a private tongue? Never! A private ecstatic, angelic speech--never! It's hard for me to argue against those who say that tongues is a private prayer language because I can't go to some text and correct them because there isn't any text! They just made it up. It's a pure invention. It's a non-existence viewpoint. Some of them try to use Romans 8, "The Holy Spirit makes intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." How obvious is that? In the first place it is the Holy Spirit and He's making the intercession, and He's doing it with groanings that can't be uttered, not groanings that can be uttered! And it isn't us--it's Him! How can you ever convolute that? There isn't any Scripture to support it. All you have here were times when God desired to speak in a language that the people didn't know in order to reveal His supernatural presence and His Word, and then it was translated for the edification of everyone. It was a very unusual situation. It happened early on; apparently at the time of Corinth it was still going on. We hear nothing about it from then on, in all the rest of the New Testament, and when it was done, it was totally restricted and very clear guidelines were given.

Another indication, as I noted to you, that Paul had in mind human languages, is in verses 21 and 22, and that's what I refer to. Where he says, "In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me.'" Paul says this is a fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11-12, and Isaiah 28:11-12 is clearly a prophecy telling the nation of Israel that God will speak His Word in Gentile languages. Do you understand how hard that was for a Jew to accept? God is going to talk in a Gentile language? Unthinkable! Absolutely inconceivable to a Jew! But that was God rebuking Israel in their unbelief, and therefore, in order to be a meaningful sign of judgment to the Jew it had to be Gentile foreign languages because it was the Gentiles that the Jews

despised and [they] thought God would never speak through a Gentile. If it was angelic speech that point would be nonsense.

Now, what was going on in Corinth obviously violated the standards that God had set down and so He reiterates them through the Apostle Paul. But clearly we can conclude then that the Corinthians were involved in counterfeiting tongues. True Biblical tongues were not gibberish--they were languages. They were Gentile languages and they were used only when interpreted for the edification of the Church so that whatever it was that God wanted to supernaturally say was clearly understood by everybody. Frankly, whatever normally passes for tongues in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement today is not true language. That and that alone eliminates it. Modern tongue speaking, often called "glossolalia" (sp. Gk., which simply means to speak languages from "glossa" and "laleo" to speak languages) isn't the same as the Biblical gift.

William Samarin is a professor of linguistics at the university of Toronto. He has done some extensive research and writing on this. He says,

Over a period of five years, I have taken part of meetings in Italy, Holland, Jamaica, Canada, and the United States. I have observed old fashioned Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals (or Charismatics). I have been in small meetings in private homes as well as in mammoth public meetings. I have seen such different cultural settings as are found among Puerto Ricans of the Bronx, the Snake Handlers of the Appalachians, and the Russian Molikhans (sp.) of Los Angeles. I have interviewed tongue speakers and tape recorded and analyzed countless samples of tongues. In every case, "glossolalia" turns out to be linguistic nonsense. In spite of superficial similarities, "glossolalia" is fundamentally not language!

William Samarin is one of many men who have made studies of "glossolalia." There are abundant tapes available of it. The studies all agree that what we are hearing today is not language. And if it is not language then it is not the Biblical gift of language! The mystery religions, remember, in and around Corinth, as we have already noted in our earlier studies, were involved in ecstatic speech and they were involved in trance-like experiences.

I have done some extensive study in years past on the Oracle of Delphi, and the mystical gibberish and ecstatic speech that was all wrapped up in that horrible orgiastic religion. And some of the Corinthians who were involved in all of that stuff had come into the Church with their past pagan stuff and corrupted the gift of tongues by counterfeiting it, and using these past ecstasies as if they were the work of the Spirit. What they were doing, by the way, is very similar to modern day "glossolalia," and Paul was trying to correct them by telling them such practices circumvented the whole point of the gift of languages and didn't qualify.

It got so bad at Corinth that it actually was shocking. Absolutely shocking. Notice verse 2, of chapter 12, he says, "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray" (that's a technical term for "flipping out," going into a trance, being spaced out), "You were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led" I mean you just followed the flow of the mysticism and the ecstasies, you just 'flipped-out',

you went into your trance. You did that when you were pagans. Verse 3, "Therefore I make known to you," listen, "no one speaking by the Spirit of God says 'Jesus is accursed.'" Stop right there. This is unbelievable. Do you know what was happening? Some of those people were "flipping out" into their trance and cursing Jesus, and because it was in a trance like thing they claimed to be the gift of tongues, people were accepting it on the basis of the phenomena, even though the content was blasphemous! What this tells us is that some of this stuff may be more than some humanly induced gibberish; it may be satanic and demonic.

Imagine saying, "Jesus is accursed" and thinking that because the phenomena was ecstatic, it was acceptable. In chapter 14, verse 2, Paul criticizes the Corinthians, "For one who speaks in a language doesn't speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries." He is not suggesting that you do that. He's not suggesting that you go off all by yourself and speak in a foreign language, or speak some kind of mystery, speak some kind of gibberish. He's condemning that, he's criticizing that, he's using irony; he's pointing out the futility of speaking in tongues without an interpreter, without it being edifying, because only God knows if anything was said. If you go off and do this privately, only God knows what you are doing. You're just mumbling mysteries.

Spiritual gifts were never intended for that--never. And so in verse 4 he says, "The one who speaks gibberish (and here I think he is referring to gibberish in the singular) does nothing but build himself up; but the one who prophesies edifies the whole church." And of course, he compares tongues with prophecy. Even the legitimate gift of tongues took a second seat, for sure, to prophecy, which everyone clearly understood. But his point in verses 2 and 4 is that, never was any spiritual gift for self-edification. So to say that I have my private prayer language to build myself up and become "Spiritman," strong, full of spiritual muscle, is to miss the whole point. You do know don't you that your spiritual gift really isn't for your benefit? Do you know that? Your spiritual gift is to the benefit of others. "As each one has received a spiritual gift," Peter says, (1 Peter 4:10), "employ it in serving one another."

Paul is not commending the use of tongues for self-edification, but condemning people who were using the gift in violation of its purpose and in disregard to the principle of love, which he covered in chapter 13. If you do it for yourselves you miss the whole point. It should never be done, except it be interpreted. Right? That eliminates the private prayer language. They were using tongues in Corinth and it wasn't even the real language gift; it was a fabrication coming from their pagan background. It was a counterfeit and they were doing it to build themselves up; it was egocentric. It was to make them appear spiritual. They wanted to exercise the most spectacular, showy display in front of other believers. Paul's point is that nobody profits from that kind of exhibition except the person speaking in tongues, and the chief value he gets out of it is to build up his own ego.

Tongues posed another problem in Corinth, used as they were in Corinth; they obscured, rather than clarified the message they were intended to convey. They made it difficult. Look at verse 16, he says, "If you bless in the spirit only, how will the one fills the place of the ungifted say the 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he doesn't know what you are saying?" What a statement. "For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified." In other words, he says, the tongues speakers in Corinth were being selfish. They were ignoring the rest of the people in the congregation. They were muddying

the message the gift was designed to communicate, doing it to gratify their own egos to show-off and demonstrate their spirituality, and nobody could even say "Amen" because nobody knew what they were saying.

"You may be giving thanks well enough. I mean, it is possible that you may be even exercising the true gift, but the way you're doing it doesn't edify anybody." I tend to think that what he is saying here is mostly a condemnation. In light of all this, somebody might say, "Well, look at the end of chapter 12, it says, 'earnestly desire the greater gifts.' Shouldn't we take that as, 'Boy, we really ought to desire this?'" That has to be properly understood. See that little phrase, "but earnestly desire the greater gifts." People say, "Well, see that's a good reason for you to go out and desire this gift." Well, first of all it is in the plural, not singular. It doesn't say an individual Christian should desire a certain gift. He already has said in chapter 12, verse 11, that the Holy Spirit gives whatever gift He wants to whoever He wants. It isn't the question of desire, it is sovereignly given. What he is really saying here is this, it should be translated this way, "You are coveting the showy gifts." It isn't an imperative, it really should be an indicative. It's a statement of fact, not a command. And, by the way, in the Greek the imperative and the indicative are the same form.

Albert Barnes takes it as the indicative; so do many other commentators: Doderidge (sp.), Locke, McKnight. Barnes observes that the Syriac New Testament renders the verse the same way. The New International Version has it right. The New International says, "you are eagerly desire the greater gifts (1CO 12:31), you're seeking these showy things." Then he says, "But I want to show you a better way; not that way. You're jealously coveting spectacular things" (it's a rebuke), "I'll show you a better way." And then he goes on to describe love, and then in 14 he goes on to describe the proper use of the gifts. So they were abusing these things in a number of ways.

Now, a statement that Paul makes in chapter 13 bears repeating to you, because it suggests to us that tongues would come to an end. That it served a purpose in the Apostolic era, but it would end. I don't want to get too tied up, but look down in verse 8. "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." Now, the statement made here in verse 8 is that tongues will cease. It means, literally, "to cease permanently." It says there is going to come a time when they stop; prophecy and knowledge will be "done away." That's a passive verb; something will stop prophecy, something will stop knowledge. But we know what it is because verses 9 and 10 tells us, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part;" there are those two things: prophecy and knowledge. And what's going to stop them is "the perfect" (in verse 10).

You say, "What's the 'perfect' thing?" I believe it is the eternal state. When the eternal state comes, prophecy will end and knowledge will end, but they haven't ended yet. And there is going to be a flourishing of knowledge, and a flourishing of prophecy in the Millennial Kingdom until the "perfect" comes, the perfect state, the eternal state. Prophecy and knowledge will go on and then they will be stopped. Something will act on them to stop them. But tongues will cease by itself (it's a middle voice verb). Tongues will cease by themselves. There will come a time when they cease, and they will cease

permanently.

Now this poses a very interesting problem. We need only to ask one question, "Did they cease?" Because if they did, they ceased permanently! Right? Did they cease? They are not going to be around when the "perfect" thing comes, clearly verse 9 only refers to prophecy and knowledge being around at that point, tongues will cease by itself. Nothing will stop it; it will cease by itself. It will just end. Now our Charismatic friends tell us that all the gifts continue and tongues have not ceased. We believe they have, and how can we support that? Just very briefly. When you look at history, when you look at theology, [when] you look at the Bible itself, I believe that you can demonstrate that tongues ceased, and that when they ceased they ceased, and that was it.

First of all, tongues was a miraculous, revelatory gift, and [as] we have noted repeatedly in this study, the Age of Miracles and Revelation ended with the Apostles and those who worked along side of them. The last recorded miracles in the New Testament occurred around A.D. 58; note that, because the last book wasn't written until A.D. 96. So you have almost 40 years with no supernatural wonders going on, even in the time in which the New Testament is still being written. From A.D. 58 to A.D. 96 when John finished the Book of Revelation, no miracle is ever recorded. Miracle gifts like tongues and healings are mentioned only in 1 Corinthians, which is a very early epistle. Two later epistles, Ephesians and Romans, both discuss spiritual gifts, but neither mention these sign gifts. Isn't that an interesting point? The later epistles discussing the gifts don't mention the sign gifts. No mention is made of the miraculous gifts; only in this very early epistle. By that time miracles were already looked on as something in the past; read Hebrews 2, 3, and 4: it was something already in the past. Apostolic authority had already been affirmed; the message needed no further confirmation. And before the first century ended, the New Testament was written, circulated through the churches, and the revelatory gifts had ceased to have a purpose and so they passed away.

Second, tongues were identified as a sign to unbelieving Israel. They signified that God had begun a new work which encompassed the Gentiles, and once that message was made, and that it was made clear to Israel, it was really not necessary to keep repeating it. Again, it was a period of transition. They had been the people primarily involved in the old covenant; now the church was in the new covenant, in the time of transition. The sign was made to Israel; that's done with. We are now in the new covenant; no sense in repeating and repeating and repeating and repeating the sign. O. Palmer Robertson articulates it this way,

Tongues served well to show that Christianity, though begun in the cradle of Judaism, was not to be distinctively Jewish. Now that the transition between old and new covenants has been made, the sign of transition has no abiding value in the life of the Church. Today there is no need for a sign to show that God is moving from the single nation of Israel to all the nations. That movement has become an accomplished fact, as in the case of the founding office of Apostle, so the particularly transitional gift of tongues has fulfilled it's function as covenantal sign for the old and new covenant people of God. Once having fulfilled that role it has no further function among the people of God.

Furthermore, the gift of tongues was inferior to the other gifts. It was primarily a sign gift; it couldn't

really edify the Church as prophecy, that is, preaching and teaching could. It was easily misused to edify oneself and build oneself up. And since the Church meets for edification, better to pursue prophecy. Furthermore, history records that tongues did cease. I don't need to go into all the details. You'll find, as I said, it begins to cease after 1 Corinthians; it doesn't appear any more. Peter never mentions tongues; James never mentions tongues; John never mentions tongues; Jude never mentions tongues; they just don't talk about them. In the Post

Apostolic age there is no mention of tongues. Cleon Rodgers (sp.) wrote, "It is significant that the gift of tongues is nowhere alluded to, hinted at, or even found in the Apostolic Fathers, which came after the Early Church. Chrysostom, Augustine, those Early Church theologians of the Eastern and Western Churches, considered tongues absolutely obsolete and non-existent."

During the first 500 years of the Church, the only time you really see any claim to tongues are the followers of Montanist, who was branded a heretic. The next time any significant tongue speaking arises is in the late 17th century. A group of militant Protestants in the Sevenall (sp.) region of southern France began to prophesy, experience visions, and speak in tongues--now we're talking the 17th century. They were known as the Sevenall Prophets and they were remembered for their political and military activities, not their spiritual legacy. Many of their prophecies were unfulfilled. They were rabidly anti-Catholic and advocated the use of armed force against the Catholic Church. Many of them were consequently persecuted and killed by Rome.

At the other end of the spectrum were the Jansenists, who were Roman Catholic loyalists who opposed the Reformers' teachings on justification by faith and claimed to be able to speak in tongues. And then there were the Shakers, they were an American sect of Quaker roots that flourished in the mid 1700's, the 18th century. They were led by Mother Ann Lee; and Mother Ann, a strange name for someone like her, because she regarded herself as the female equivalent of Jesus Christ and claimed to be able to speak 72 languages and believed that sexual intercourse, even in marriage, was sinful. Now how you can believe that and be called Mother Ann Lee, I'm not sure. Not only that, how you can believe that teaching and expect your movement to last, I'm not sure. They spoke in tongues while dancing and singing in a trance. In the early 19th century a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, Edward Irving, and members of his congregation practiced speaking in tongues and some of these other Charismatic things. They became known as Irvingites. Their movement was discredited [with] false prophecies. They were attributing some of their gifts to evil spirits. They became the Catholic Apostolic Church, taught many false doctrines; embraced several strange and bizarre things; created Apostolic offices, etc.

Now all of these supposed manifestations of tongues were always identified as heretical, fanatical, unorthodox, outside the Church; and we conclude that when they ceased they ceased, and there have been continual off and on fabrications of counterfeit tongues. Since these gifts did cease, the burden of proof is on the Charismatics to prove that what is happening today is valid. Why do we always have to get backed in the corner and prove our case? Why don't they take the Bible and prove theirs and look at history as well and do the same?

Some have said, "Well, this is the final outpouring of the Spirit." No it's not. The final outpouring of the Spirit Joel wrote about, will be in the Millennial Kingdom. This is not the Millennial Kingdom. And so there's so many doctrinal, historical issues at hand. Now, that leads us to a concluding thought. What kind of things are they doing then? What is going on? How do we explain what they do? Well, if you ask them they will say things like this,

What's the use in speaking in tongues? The only way I can answer that is to say, "What's the use of a Bluebird? What's the use of a sunset? Just sheer, unmitigated uplift. Just joy unspeakable and with it health, and peace, and rest, and release from burdens and tensions."

Boy, that's pretty great stuff! Or they might say,

When I started praying in tongues I felt, (and people told me) I looked 20 years younger. I am built up, I am given joy, courage, peace, the sense of God's presence, and I happen to be a weak personality who needs this.

Now, that kind of testimony is a pretty heavy pitch, pretty powerful. If it can give you health, happiness, and make you look younger, then the potential market is unlimited. On the other hand the evidence to support such claims is dubious. Would anyone seriously argue, seriously, that today's tongues speakers live holier lives? Live more consistent lives than believers who don't speak in tongues? What about all the Charismatic leaders in recent years whose lives have proved to be morally and spiritually bankrupt? And does the evidence show that Charismatic Churches are, on the whole, spiritually stronger and more solid than Bible believing churches that do not advocate the gifts? The truth is, you must look long and diligently to find a Charismatic fellowship where spiritual growth and Biblical understanding are genuinely at the heart. If that kind of stuff doesn't produce more spiritual Christians or believers who are better informed theologically, then what is it doing? And what of the many former tongue speakers who testify they didn't experience peace, satisfaction, power, joy, or find the fountain of youth when they spoke in tongues.

Why does it produce so much disillusionment? Why is the emotional high in the initial ecstatic experience harder and harder to duplicate? No, it is significant to note that Pentecostals and Charismatics can't substantiate their claim that what they are doing is the Biblical gift. There's really no evidence to prove it. There is no evidence that it's language. You say then, "What is it?" Could be demonic. Could be satanic. I think it was in Corinth, in some cases. Could be that. Ecstatic speech is a part of many pagan religions in Africa, East Africa. Tonga people of Africa, when a demon is exorcised, sing in Zulu even though they say they don't know the Zulu language. Ecstatic speech is found today among Muslims, Eskimos, Tibetan monks. It is involved in parapsychological occult groups. Did you know that the Mormons, even Joseph Smith himself advocates speaking in tongues? It could be demonic.

Secondly, it could be learned behavior; you just learn how to do it. If you can go to the Hunter's seminar, they will "jump start" you. It could be psychological. It could be a kind of a self-induced hypnosis, a kind of a trance, where you just yield up all of your will, and you yield up your vocal cords and you empty out

your brain, and the power of suggestion takes over and you become psychologically induced. And once you have that experience, you then learn to do it and just do it. Many studies have been done to show that it is psychological. But the burden of proof is really not on us to prove what it is. Suffice it to say that this unique gift given for the Apostolic time is irreproducible today, and whatever purports to be that is not that; it is something counterfeit. A myriad of studies, which I'll deal with in the book [Charismatic Chaos], and when you get a copy you can read them in detail, give evidence of the fact that motor-autonomism (sp.), ecstasy, hypnosis, psychic-catharsis, collective psyche, memory excitation, and all other kind of terms are used to describe people who go into these kinds of trance like experiences. And then on the majority of occasions it is just learned behavior. You just learn to say it and so you say it.

It is interesting to me that I have listened to people speak in tongues in many different parts of this country, on many different occasions, through many years, and I find very similar verbiage, so what they learn kind of gets filtered and passed through the whole movement. Why do people want to do this? Why are they getting into this? Well, many people are hungry to get whatever is missing in their spiritual life and they don't know that it is all about learning the Word and walking in the Spirit. They think they can get it in one big dose, in a sort of a shot, a jolt out of heaven. Many people are hungry to express themselves spiritually and they have been coming to Church for years and they aren't involved, and they find a place where they can speak out and go through this expression, and it kind of releases their pent up feelings.

Some people want acceptance and security. Some people need to somehow verbalize their spirituality because they have so many doubts, that they are looking for something to prove that they are really Christians, and so they want to find some act, some verbalization, some physical thing that can help convince them their Christianity is real. And some people have been sitting in dead, cold churches for so long that the lifelessness, that permeates their religious experience, causes them to cry out for something other than what they have experienced.

Now having said all that, let me say this, there are a lot of things worse than speaking in tongues. Can I throw one at you? Gossip! Does that surprise you? If you speak in tongues, that's bad, but it doesn't normally affect other people in a negative way. If you gossip, that will! And so I just needed to say that as a footnote, unless we walk out of here and think because we don't speak in tongues everything is under control. Better you should talk gibberish that nobody understands, than gossip. Just to put it into perspective. Well, I have more to say, but I don't have any time to say it, and I've got to come back in two weeks and move to the next theme.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for the clarity of your Word. We want to basically understand these issues in the light of your Scripture. We want to love our true brothers in Christ who are in this movement. We do recognize what your Word teaches about this gift, and yet Lord, we want to be sensitive and gracious and loving to those who are caught up in it. Father, we do pray that you will help us understand that what you want is not for us to blank out our minds, but to love you with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. That what you desire out of us is not that we think on nothing, but that whatever is true and pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report, we think on these things. Not that we have a blank mind but that we have a renewed mind.

Lord, not that we seek some mystical inexplicable experience, but that we come to know you, the true and living God, and your Son Jesus Christ, through the knowledge of the Word, wherein we are made strong. Father, we will find no benefit spiritually in mystical, ecstatic, emotional highs. But we do find great benefit in the truth, committed to our hearts through the Word and applied by the Spirit. And so we pray Father, that you will direct us continually into your truth, that we might live for your praise. In Christ's Name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-62, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 11. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 11, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 11**

### ***What is True Spirituality?***

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Now we come to the next in our series that we have been studying on the Charismatic movement. Tonight we want to talk about the subject, "What is True Spirituality?" In Romans 12:2 we find a good starting point for our thinking tonight, and that is this statement by the Apostle Paul, "Do not be conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Many Charismatics believe that you can renew your mind and achieve holiness without any conscious effort. They would say (some of them), that sanctification can come to you through an experience, effortlessly; sometimes even through subliminal conditioning. My first exposure to the notion of subliminal spirituality came a few years ago when I received a flyer advertising subliminal neckties. They were fairly stylish paisley ties; normal looking at a casual glance. But the ad copy informed the prospective buyer,

Hidden in the fabric, almost totally undetectable to the human eye are the words "Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves." The ties are made from anointed cloth offered by a Charismatic enterprise [and] can be yours for a tax deductible love gift of \$30. You could also buy seven for a tax deductible gift of \$200 to help us

feed the hungry.

We are not sure who the hungry are but I am sure that would help. Quoting the ad further,

For years Russian and Communist scientists have experimented with subliminal advertising designed to influence unsuspecting consumers to their ideology and propaganda. Now, the Lord has revealed to His people how to use it for His glory.

A magnified picture of one of the ties revealed that indeed the words "Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves," were over and over again woven through the fabric. "When worn," the leaflet promised, "The words 'Jesus Saves' are actually being planted in the subconscious minds of everyone who sees it." In other words, you can do your witnessing without ever having to say a word to anybody. At the time it frankly struck me as a bizarre, somewhat atypical oddity, but in retrospect I see that it was something of a harbinger of one of the latest fads in the Charismatic movement: this idea of subliminal messaging. Despite having some occult overtones and some New Age involvement, and for all intents and purposes being absolutely useless, it has quickly become a popular means of addressing spiritual, emotional, and health problems among Charismatics.

I mentioned earlier in our study the subliminal word therapy tapes offered by the Raffa Ranch (sp.) as a means of healing cancer patients. Raffa offers the subliminal messaging cassette tapes for \$14.95 each, and although the price seems high, thousands of people desperately seeking cure for cancer have evidently been willing to pay the price. Linda Fell (sp.) explains how the tapes were born; she says,

In 1983, God healed me of Breast Cancer and called me to raise up a place where cancer victims can come and be healed. In obedience to that call, our family of four moved to 70 acres of land in a small rural community in Northwest Florida, and there we began construction on the 5,000 square foot Raffa Ranch lodge. After almost two years we had received our first cancer patient and quickly realized that our commission would not be an easy one. Over the next two years we learned much, but continued to see the majority of our guests die. We continually cried out to God to show us how to get the Word in His precious people in their crisis situation, and one day we stumbled on to a television program describing how the subliminal process was helping masses of people use positive affirmation.

The idea came--could the pure Word of God be used in a similar fashion? After two months of some research and much prayer we knew we had not only a creative idea but a mandate from God to produce a tool that would help heal the sick. The Lord said that I was to be the voice since He could trust my spirit, and use Christian musicians, engineers and studios to create this tape. In June of '88 "The Word Therapy Healing" tape was released and healing reports were immediate; within two weeks a woman was healed of cancer.

To those who, by the way, might have fears that subliminal therapy is of the Devil, Mrs. Fells writes,

Your cautions are justified as you approach subliminal tapes; be assured of this, there is no need to fear

our tapes. They are holy and have the blessing of the Lord on them; we use no hypnosis, no relaxation technique, no New Age, or deceptive practices; simply a modern technological method of multi-track duplication of the pure Word of God. Your first tape will convince you as the anointing will destroy the yoke. If the Apostles were alive today, they would consider "Word Therapy" a scroll of the 90's.

Several Charismatic ministries offer these subliminal tapes; one group called "Renew Ministries" offer continuous play tapes for \$20 (a continuous play means you don't have to rewind them); they promise you freedom from doubt, fear, failure, fear of death, guilt, grief, depression, temper, pride, lust, temptation, pornography, procrastination, unforgiveness, rejection, drugs, alcohol, smoking, anger, rebellion, anxiety, panic, judging, homosexuality, scars from child abuse, and molestation--all for \$19.95!

Other Renew tapes promise to speak into being. They will speak into being in your life: prosperity, weight loss, peace, healing, self-esteem, salvation, marital harmony, surrender to God, acceptance of God's Love, and a closer walk with God. And according to Renew, "Bible-based subliminal messages hit controlling spirits where they live and command them to leave in Jesus' name and then the void is filled with the Word of God."

Now, you might be asking, "What are the mechanics of such tapes?" Renew puts multiple voices on different tracks, simultaneously chanting a message aimed at indwelling demons. For example, one tape designed for people struggling with homosexuality includes this message, "I speak to you spirits of homosexuality, I curse you and cast you down in the name of Jesus!" That message is followed by Scripture verses relating to moral purity. And so it goes.

Other companies use variations of that approach. "Life Source," an El Paso based ministry, uses an audible track of ocean waves. Inaudible, subliminal background tracks carry Scripture verses. You can hear the waves, you can't hear the verses. Healing evangelist Vicky Jamineson Peterson (sp.) of Tulsa, Oklahoma, plays a reading of the entire King James Version, New Testament, at a rapid speed on a 60 minute cassette. Imagine, the entire New Testament in 60 minutes! Her brochures promise that positive suggestions are being stored in your belief system at a rate of 100,000 suggestions an hour!

You wrap this all up and it's all so easy and it's all so effortless; you put on a tape and you get 100,000 suggestions for your spiritual life, you get cured of every problem you have, you get all the demons chased away, and if you put it on your tie the people who see your tie are going to get saved! This is all so painless, it's all so easy. Supposedly you can absorb Scripture without ever paying attention to it. You can get involved in spiritual development, spiritual growth, miracles, and so forth without ever opening your Bible. Things like fervent prayer and diligent holiness, and earnest devotion, and careful study, and conscientious meditation on the things of God are rendered unnecessary by this approach. It used to be that losing weight required self-control and some discipline. Now, we are told a continuous play tape can exercise demons of fat and gluttony for you and there is absolutely nothing to it; pay the money and you are delivered. More important, it used to be that faith and spiritual understanding and righteousness were pursued through disciplined lives of devotion and study and prayer, and now the proponents of

subliminal therapy promise that holiness can happen to you even while asleep!

Subliminal sanctification and the Charismatic movement seem to be good partners; they fit together perfectly. From the very beginning Charismatic movements, whichever of them, have promised primarily shortcuts to spiritual maturity. One of the greatest attractions of the Charismatic movement has always been that it offers believers "Power, Understanding, and Spirituality" immediately through some kind of experience; and if you just have the experience--you've got it without the time, without the pain, without the progress, without the struggle that's natural to any growth process.

The question is, "Is this really a shortcut to sanctification? Can a believer receive subliminal messages, a divine jolt, or some other kind of quick, immediate power boost and be instantly brought out of infancy into maturity?" The answer is, "Not according to Scripture." For the typical Charismatic the gateway to spirituality is through an experience, and that experience is usually defined as the "Baptism of the Spirit with speaking in Tongues." They tell us that if you have that experience--you are zapped! It accurately describes the way most Charismatics view sanctification; they think you go along in your Christian life until you get the Baptism of the Spirit, speak in Tongues, you get the "zap" and then you have been elevated to sanctification. Some would go so far as to say you've reached the "Second level of Grace."

There are many Charismatics who will even use the word "zap" and say, "Well, may Jesus zap you!" I had the occasion (it was a strange and bizarre one) to be invited to speak at the "Full Gospel Businessmen's Luncheon." That is a Charismatic group. They were having their Southern California Luncheon and somebody in the group thought that I had had the Gift of Tongues, that somewhere along the line I had gotten the Baptism of the Spirit and had spoken in Tongues; and they invited me to be the speaker. They asked me to speak on "Speaking in Tongues." This is true! And this was when Jay Leddy was still on our church staff and he went with me. I thought they were just open and wanted to hear the other side. They thought I had the "Gift." And so I went and they had a nice lunch and after lunch I got up, and I launched into my Biblical discussion on the reality of what the Bible says about Tongues. And I could note there was a severe amount of nervousness and movement in the crowd, and I didn't know why because I thought these gracious people just wanted to know what the other side believes.

So I continued to "wax eloquent" about what I believed the Bible was teaching about the cessation of the Gift of Tongues, and that it had no part for today and that it was a false standard of spirituality and things like that. It was the only time that I can remember in my ministry that I was literally, physically, pulled out of the pulpit! A man grabbed my arm and pulled me down in a chair--before I was finished! And he got up and he said, "We've got to stop and have prayer for this brother because he's deceived and confused" (and then I was really confused because I thought that I was doing what they expected me to do). I will never forget his prayer. He started out by saying, "We want to pray for this brother, that sometime soon, in the middle of the night, the Holy Spirit will zap him!" That's exactly what he said and that's what he prayed. So I have heard that term used.

Charismatic evangelist, Norvall Hayes (sp.) explained what happened when he got his zap,

God came on me so strong and started blessing me so much, I just fell on my knees and began crying and weeping and getting blessed. I found out that God loves me and He was petting me because I obeyed the Holy Spirit.

That's somewhat like the experience of many. Unfortunately, the Charismatic movement has divided Christianity into two levels--the Zapped and the Unzapped. And the Zapped believe they are at least a bit more spiritual than the Unzapped. Like it or not, the effect has been severely schismatic. Some of the Unzapped wonder why they don't have the experiences that their Charismatic friends describe. Charismatics argue that unless you have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with Tongues, you can't function the way God really wants you to; you're missing something. If on the other hand, you do have the Baptism of the Spirit with Tongues, you have been elevated to a level of spirituality and sanctification.

A good example of this particular kind of viewpoint is Melvin Hodges' book called "Spiritual Gifts" and I quote,

While the full manifestation of a person's gift and ministry must await the fullness of the Spirit, there may be a partial measure of spiritual ministry and incomplete manifestation of spiritual gifts or endowments before the culmination of the Pentecostal gift is experienced. We must not lose sight of the fact that in the New Testament, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (with the Charismatic experience) is considered an essential and primary requisite for a fully developed spiritual life and ministry.

And he is doing deference to people like me and others who have some kind of a ministry, because you just can't just flatly deny that people have a ministry, but it is a second class ministry: it is a partial measure of spiritual ministry, an incomplete manifestation of spiritual gifts and endowments because we have never had the culminating Pentecostal Gift of the Baptism of the Spirit and that "Zap."

Now, are these people correct when they say this? Is there a gap between Christians? Are there two levels? Do the Charismatics have some other level of Spirituality they have attained? And are non-Charismatic Christians somehow mired in the muck of a second-classed Christianity? We want to answer that question by considering the Scripture. I think we need to be very direct in going to the Word of God so that we can understand it. A foundational place to go (and you can turn there in your Bible, and we are going to go through these fairly rapidly because I know these are truths with which you are familiar) but it is 1 Corinthians 2, and I want to kind of give you a little bit of a feeling here for some of the terminology that is important to the issue.

1 Corinthians 2, verses 14 and 15,

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.

Paul spent most of 1 Corinthians 2 discussing the difference between the natural man and the spiritual

man, and that's the difference between the unsaved and the saved. The unregenerate is the natural man and the regenerate is the spiritual man. The natural man doesn't know God, he is unsaved, isolated in his humanness and sin, and headed for hell. He cannot understand the things of the Spirit. In contrast the spiritual man knows God and understands spiritual things.

Now, that is very basic, and what I want you to understand is according to 1 Corinthians 2, all Christians are--what? Spiritual! It's basic; its basic terminology. That's our position in Christ. We are alive in the Spirit; we have the life of God within our souls; we possess the Holy Spirit (as Romans 8:6-9 clearly indicates). And again in Romans 8, if we look at that, and I would just draw you there for a brief moment (chapter 8 of Romans) to affirm that same thought. Romans 8:6,

The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, [same contrast] because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it's not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God, however you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.

And then he goes on to say the Spirit of God dwells in you. Only two kinds of people: those in the flesh and those in the Spirit. Those in the Spirit are Spiritual, and those who are natural are also fleshly. So in the purest, truest, simplest sense, there are only two kinds of people: spiritual people, and natural people, who are also carnal people. The first understanding that I want you to have is that unregenerate people are natural; that is, they live according to human nature and they are carnal or "fleshy." They operate out of the flesh--the impulse of the flesh. Christian people are spiritual; the Holy Spirit dwells within them; their inner man has been made alive; they are new creations; they are sensitive to God and alive to spiritual reality. Now, that's basic.

Now, to be spiritual simply means to be alive to God, to possess the Holy Spirit, and all Christians are spiritual and all non-believers are carnal and natural. But let me take it a step further. It is possible for a spiritual believer to act in a carnal way. In other words, it is possible for us to behave like our old self. We understand that don't we? We still have the remaining flesh; that carnal reality is there and it is very possible that that carnal reality, that unredeemed human flesh, can still exercise and exert its power. And so I want you to look for a moment at 1 Corinthians, chapter 3. Christians are spiritual--they just don't always act spiritual. And that is really contrary to our own new nature.

But Paul says (interesting way he words his words in 1 Corinthians 3:1),

I brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, I should have been able to talk to you as spiritual men, but I couldn't, and I had to speak to you as men of flesh. I had to talk to you like you were still unregenerate, as if you were just infantile in Christ.

Obviously, one who is new in Christ, one who is an infant in Christ is going to have a greater struggle with the flesh (right?) then one who is mature in Christ. And so he says,

You're acting as if you're brand new baby Christians struggling with the flesh that's continually gaining the victory over you, and I can't even talk to you as spiritual because you have succumbed so frequently to the flesh.

In verse 2, he says,

I can't even give you meat (solid food); I have to give you milk because you can't handle the meat, (verse 3) "Because you are still fleshy. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshy, ("fleshy" it says but "fleshy" is a good way to translate that) and are you not walking like mere men?"

There's the key! He says, you're walking like natural men; you're acting like you used to act. You're spiritual but you are acting like a natural man, and that is, you are succumbing to the flesh. He should have been able to talk to them as spiritual because they were Christians, but they weren't acting spiritual; they were not receiving the Word; there was unholiness in their lives; they were behaving carnally; and they had to be dealt with as if they were brand new baby Christians who were still being victimized by the things that used to be a part of their life.

Now, all Christians face the same problem. All Christians are spiritual positionally, but we are not always spiritually practically, right? We are alive to God, we sense God, the Spirit lives in us; the life of Christ has manifested itself in us and we are a new creation, but we don't always act like that because we are incarcerated in the unredeemed flesh and it rears its ugly head. I think a good illustration of this is the Apostle Peter, borrowing a little bit from a pre-Church text, but he fits the picture so well. In Matthew 16 Peter recognized Christ as the Son of the Living God, you remember that, and Jesus immediately responded and said, "Blessed are you, Simon, and now I am going to change your name to Peter (which meant rock). You are going to be a new person: you are going to be solid like a rock."

But in John 21, a lot later, Jesus met Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and Peter had denied Christ (you know all about that). But Peter, even after the resurrection, was still weak. Before the resurrection he was in a denial state; after the resurrection he was in a disobedient state. And he had gone back to fishing and the Lord confronts him and calls him to task and asks him if he loves Him, and if he'll feed His sheep and goes through all of that. And when the Lord talked to him, remember those three times He said, "Do you love Me?" He didn't call him Peter; what did He call him? "Simon! Simon, Simon, Simon!" Why did He do that? After all he had been given a new name, "Rock." I'll tell you why He did it, because he wasn't acting like a rock; he was acting like a Simon. He wasn't acting like a transformed man; he was acting like the guy he used to be. Whenever he acted like the guy he used to be Jesus called him by his old name, which is a pretty vivid reminder.

What Peter had done and what all of us do, from time to time, is temporarily cease from following closely after Christ. Even after Pentecost Peter continued to struggle. And do you realize that if you go back to Galatians, chapter 2, you read one of the most devastating accounts. Galatians 2:11-12; the Apostle Paul had to go nose-to-nose with Peter and confront him because he was acting in a carnal way. And he did that publicly before all those Jews up there, and confronted Peter in Antioch, and that whole

thing was so embarrassing to Peter. And it got written in the Bible; as if Peter didn't have enough "Bad Press" in the gospels, he has to show up in the epistles? And there he is again getting labeled as this "Guy who can't seem to get his act together." And he says, "You are acting in a fleshy way!"

There is some measure of comfort in that for all of us, to find out that one of the choicest apostles of all "stumbles and bumbles" his way around, both before and after Pentecost. We would like to relegate him to some other dispensation and make ourselves feel more guilty, I guess, for our failures, but it is fortunate that he failed after the resurrection and Pentecost just so that we know that this is reality. So it is that we do the same thing; we are new creations and we have been transformed, but very often we act in a fleshy way. I think the Apostle Paul fully understood this (don't you, in Romans 6-7?), he says, "With my mind the law of God; with my redeemed nature, but also with my flesh I serve the law of sin or the principle of sin operating in me." And he says, "I can't stand this struggle because I don't want to do what I do and I don't do what I want to do, and I am a wretched man and how am I going to get out of this mess?"

Spirituality, beloved, is not some permanent state that you enter into the minute you get zapped! You are spiritual positionally, but practically you never enter into a permanent state of spirituality. You don't have some zap and become spiritual. Spirituality is simply receiving the Living Word daily from God and letting it dwell in you richly and then living it out in the fullness of obedience. It is walking by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. It doesn't say, "Have one zap and you are set for life, of five zaps, or wait for the next zap, or go to the meeting where they zap you." It just says, "Walk in the Spirit and you'll overcome the flesh."

The word "walk" is a very important word in the New Testament. It means "moment by moment conduct." It's a choice word: you walk one foot at a time and one step at a time. Paul said in Galatians 5:25, "If we live by the Spirit," and we do--better to translate, "Since we live by the Spirit, since we are spiritual, then let's just take one step at a time in the power of the Spirit. Obedient to the Word which dwells in us richly." Walking speaks about a measured pace, one step at a time, and that's how true spirituality functions--one step at a time, one moment at a time. A basic mark, just to kind of help you follow this through a little bit more, a basic mark of true spirituality is a deep awareness of sin. You know I hear people who say they reach a certain level of being zapped, and now they feel they reached a certain level of holiness. That is a dead giveaway that there is no sense of an understanding of spirituality.

You show me a truly spiritual man and I will show you a man that is overwhelmed, not with his holiness but with his sinfulness; even though it may appear to everybody else to be less than the rest, it is monumental to a spiritual man! It is not that he now feels himself to have arrived, it is that when he is spiritual he knows full well that he is far from where he ought to be. The spiritual man is aware of his sin. In Scripture, those who most despise their sinfulness were often those who were the most spiritual. Paul didn't say, "I have arrived at a very high level of spirituality." Paul said, "I am (not was, 1 Timothy 1:15) the chief sinner!" Peter said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Isaiah, the godliest man in his nation, said, "Woe is me! Damn me! Curse me! Sentence me to judgment for I am a man with a dirty mouth" (Isaiah 6:5). The spiritual man realizes he is in a death struggle with sin, and

Paul said, "Look, (1 Corinthians 15:31) I have to die" How often? "Daily! This war goes on every day and I have to slay this guy name Paul, this fleshly man, who though spiritual in the inner man is still victimized by his remaining humanness."

The ultimate objective of the spiritual man is to be like Christ and nobody gets there. Paul writes, "Not that I have already obtained it (in this life, not until glory)." Paul writes,

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already have become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).

And what was the goal? Christlikeness, and the goal is the prize. The prize is Christlikeness and the goal is Christlikeness. Paul said, "I am not there; I haven't attained it; I'm pressing towards it." Many Charismatics, however, insist that once you get the Baptism of the Spirit--spirituality is yours! But unfortunately it doesn't work that way, so you know what happens? They live under a false assumption of their true spiritual condition. When the glow of one experience fades they are forced to find another experience, and then another experience. And they find that a second work of grace is not enough, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, and so on. And they seem to have diminishing returns, and in their effort to seek something more they often unwittingly abandon the Bible; they unwittingly abandon prayer and the true path of spirituality and they run errantly and wildly down a road of experience that leads to an inevitable increasing carnality.

Charismatic books and pamphlets and articles are filled with testimonies, also of how a certain special experience brought a new degree of spirituality. The testimony follow something like this,

When I was baptized by the Spirit, when I spoke in tongues, then I began to live a more holy life (you've heard that). I had more power, I had more freedom, I had more joy, I had effective witness, more love, more fulfillment as a Christian.

I have heard that many, many times. And although not all Charismatics are consistent on this point, most would strongly connect that with speaking in tongues as a means of obtaining that spirituality. But Scripture just doesn't support that idea. In 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul commended the Church at Corinth and this is what he said, "You are not lacking in any gift, you are not lacking in any gift." They had all the gifts: they had the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretations of tongues--they had them all in the Corinthian Church! They also had every imaginable spiritual problem. They were spiritual in terms of their gifts, they had spiritual gifts. The true Christians were spiritual in terms of their position, but their actions were carnal and the Church was in carnal chaos. You see spirituality isn't related to your gifts or to even some supernatural kind of manifestation through those gifts of miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretation.

The Corinthian believers of the First Century were not unique; Christians today face similar problems. We are saved, we have the Holy Spirit, we have certain spiritual gifts but we still struggle with the flesh. Your spiritual gift doesn't change your struggle with the flesh at all. If tongues is a spiritual gift then why in the world would tongues change your spiritual struggle? It certainly didn't do anything for the Corinthians; they were still fleshly, carnal. He said that to them in chapter 3, as I read a little bit ago, "You have all the gifts and you are carnal!" So even having the gift of tongues has no relationship to your spirituality. Do you see that? It doesn't have any relationship to it. No spiritual gift will guarantee that you are going to win the struggle and live on a supernatural spiritual plain. The only way you can win the spiritual battle and live according to your position as a spiritual being, having been transformed, is to walk in the Spirit; Galatians 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill. . ." what? "The lusts of the flesh."

You overcome the flesh by a daily, step-by-step obedience to the Spirit of God. And I have to say that any discerning Charismatic will, and perhaps some do, admit that he or she has just as much trouble with the flesh and the appetites and lusts and desires of the flesh as anybody else! Enthusiasm, euphoria, fervor, excitement, emotion, all of that stuff, all the things Charismatics tend to equate with spiritual intensity, have no power to restrain lusts, no power to conquer pride, no power to overcome selfishness, no power to deal with greed; none at all.

Charismatics, whose only strength is drawn from the last high, the last experience, in fact, are more likely to be spiritually weak and spiritually immature. Dr. Charles Smith, who is now with the Lord, was the dean of our seminary, points out, and I quote,

The doctrines of free love and spiritual marriages have too often appeared in association with tongues. Perversion of the Biblically teaching relating to sex and marriage can be seen in the Mormons and the Shakers. Amy Simple McPherson (started the Four Square Church) was not the only tongues leader to receive a revelation that her marriage was not "in the Lord" and that she should enter another union. One of the serious problems of the Pentecostal movement has been the fact that many of its leaders have fallen into immorality. One well known Pentecostal preacher, a woman widowed for three years, professed to be with child by the Holy Ghost! Pharham, father of the modern Pentecostal movement was arrested for the grossest of immoralities.

Now what he is pointing out is something we continue to see played out on the scene today, right? This problem of gross immorality, this problem of a lifestyle totally inconsistent with spirituality; what you have got here are people who are getting "zapped" all the time but on the contrary are not only not spiritual, but tend to give manifestations of unspiritual lives, carnal fleshly lives that are preoccupied with lust, pride, selfishness, and greed. To compound the difficulty, when they stumble they are not even likely to take the responsibility for it. They are going to blame demonic power, rather than examining their theology or their fleshly will or their Biblical ignorance.

With all their claims of new power and a new level of spirituality the Charismatics have no guarantee that any of their ecstatic experiences will put them in any kind of lasting spiritual condition. Now, please

understand that I am not saying there aren't people in the Charismatic movement who are spiritual--there are. There are people who are in those churches who walk in the Spirit because they love Christ truly, they study His word; but the upper echelon propagation, the stuff they are telling people and the "party-line" (if you will) about spirituality is not legitimate. No matter what kind of experience they think they've had, no matter how often they speak in tongues, no matter how frequently they get slain in the Spirit (One of their leaders said, "If you not slain in the Spirit every week, you're never going to be able to live the Christian life."), no matter how many times they fall over backwards they still face the same challenge given to every Christian--they have to walk in the power of the Spirit and obedience to the Word which they understand; die to self and sin everyday.

There isn't any shortcut. And I want to submit to you that begins with the mind and not the emotion. That begins with an understanding of truth, an understanding of Scripture, an understanding of God, and Christ, and man, and sin, and the Holy Spirit. It starts with the mind. Unfortunately there is so much doctrinal ignorance in the movement that the people are trying to function without an understanding of who God is, who Christ is, what the Bible teaches about the Spirit and spiritual life. How many people join that movement because they have been promised an easy answer to problems and a quick and easy path to instant godliness? It's sad. Sometimes I look at it and I think it's more giddy than godly. You can turn on, almost any night, on Charismatic television and see it.

It's emphasizing amusement and frivolity, and there is a lot of laughing and sort of breathless gushing and time for silliness, bafoonery, and shallow talk. You look at the expensive lavish clothing and the whole scene that goes with it, the behavior, so many women who seem, to me at least, to violate most everything that is taught in 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2, and I get embarrassed because I know the watching world is looking at this and assuming that this is Christianity. I mean, this has got to be Christianity--it says it is! There is nothing wrong with being happy, I am a happy person. I mean, I am always happy. In fact, I've always said that, "I think God has taken happiness from a whole lot of people just to give it to me because I have more than anyone could imagine."

There is nothing wrong with praising God and laughing and feeling self-fulfilled, enjoying your Christian life and enjoying life in general. But, it seems to me that many in the Charismatic movement seem so determined to pursue the emotional high, the quick thrill, the exciting event, the electrifying moment, the exhilarating conference, that they don't know anything about the serious part of spiritual life. They don't know about the consistent walk with God that deals with the reality of your life, and therefore, they have given up the rich rewards of that walk; and they have settled for a superficial frivolity, sort of a cheap substitute; and gaiety is no substitute for godliness.

Real godliness doesn't carry with it some kind of silly emotional high. Again I say, that the truly spiritual and truly godly person pursues righteousness with a burning sense of conviction, with a deep awareness of his own sin. And when the Spirit of God is at work there is deep joy, but there is also a sort of corresponding profound sorrow. Walter Chantry (sp.) has aptly written and I quote from him,

When the Holy Spirit comes to sinful men, He initially brings sorrow, but in Charismatic circles there is

only the boast of rapid transport to joy and peace. Any religious experiences that brings immediate rejoicing and uninterrupted cheerfulness are not to be trusted. There is much more to spirituality than a lifting of the spirits and the entering into the exuberant life and in extending one's succession of thrilling experiences. Yet, in many of the popular neo-Pentcostal societies, you will look in vain for anything else. No one who has God's spirit can walk through our world without deep groanings of sorrow and distress when the stench of immorality feels his nostrils. The spirit filled man cannot be happy, happy, happy, all the day! If the Spirit were to come powerfully today, it would not be to make men clap their hands for joy but to make them smite their breasts in sorrow.

And Chantrey (sp.) adds, "He's not the jolly spirit--He's the Holy Spirit!" Charismatics usually give the impression however, that it is more jolly than holy. And I don't want to be ungracious to those in the movement who are genuine, and there are many. But the face of Charismaticism that we see cast before us projects so much of this. Meanwhile, the self-indulgence in immoderation gets louder, gaudier, flashier, and more eccentric. This trend I don't see as the fruit of genuine godliness.

One of the most unfortunate characteristics of this movement is the continual emphasis also on the astonishing, and the dramatic, and the sensational, and the idea that that has got to be the part of everyday life. The effect really is to intimidate anybody who is not getting the same kind of results: tongues and prophecies and spiritual pyrotechnics and whatever else is going on, miraculously filled fuel tanks and audible voices from God and all that. There are people--you've got to know that those churches are filled with people who don't quite have that spectacular list of events on their weekly schedule. They are getting, frankly, not any spectacular things at all, and they live through a dry spell. And you have got to wonder what they think and how unfulfilling and sad of heart they find themselves.

The Apostle Paul knew what it was to be scorned, and he knew what it was to be intimidated by people who felt they had attained a higher level than he. Did you know that? Second Corinthians, you don't have to turn to it, we don't have time, but in 2 Corinthians, you read chapter 9 and to the end, and Paul talks about the "Super Apostles." Remember he had poured out 18 months of his life and love establishing the Corinthian Church. And when he wrote back two letters, obviously there were so many problems. The worst of it, from his viewpoint was, some guys had risen in the Church who wanted to destroy Paul. Their whole view was that Paul was not an honorable man and that they had reached a higher level of spirituality than he and they were the "Super Apostles." By the way, the leader of that group, I believe, was the thorn in the flesh, the messenger from Satan that really tore him up.

They came to town while he was gone, or they rose from the congregation while he was gone. They were the new guys. They love to extol themselves and elevate themselves; they had the power, they had the experience, they had the estacies. They had swept the Corinthian believers off their feet and it broke the heart of Paul because people in the Church were believing them and following them and turning their back on Paul. And it all came back to Paul that his spirituality was in question. He didn't measure up to the superstars; he didn't measure up to these new guys. They were saying that Paul couldn't play in their league. How did Paul respond? He didn't rattle off a list of healings or other miracles he had performed; instead he presented his credentials. He didn't say, "Well, I have raised five and you know, I've healed a 1,000. I've cast demons out of 1,500; here's a few illustrations." Do you know what he said? He said,

I want to present my credentials: five times I received thirty-nine lashes. Three times I had been beaten with rods, once I had been stoned and left for dead, three times I have been shipwrecked, I have spent a night and a day in the sea. I have been hungry and sleepless, I have been in dangers from robbers and Gentiles and even my own countrymen. I have been run out of town more times than I can even remember. I've got a thorn in the flesh that the Lord won't even take away and I have asked Him three times. You know what? Do you want to know my credentials? I am well content with weakness, insults, distresses, persecutions, difficulties for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then I am strong. I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually, I should have been commended by you for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

Wow, what an amazing list of credentials. It seems to me very doubtful that Paul would have made much of a guest on a Charismatic television show. Instead of being "Slain in the Spirit" he was almost slain in the body over and over again. He couldn't even remember his visions; he couldn't even get on to tell them. Second Corinthians 12:1-4 he mentions being caught up to the third heaven fourteen years before, but he couldn't remember the details. Now, how are you going to make a career out of that if you can't even remember what happened? Instead of emphasizing his miraculous trip to the third heaven and back, he wanted to talk about his weakness, and he wanted to talk about his pain! Because all of that weakness and all of that pain put all the glory in the place it should be and gave it to God. That's the kind of true spirituality that is missing in the movement, and that's the kind of true spirituality that doesn't make it on the "Best Seller" chart.

According to Paul, his life was weak, his life was wretched, his life was desperate, he was humble, he was the chief sinner, he was in a constant state of stress, tension, fear, even misery from the time he came to Christ until his head got cut off. The same is true of the other apostles: Peter, James, [and] John. You never find anywhere some kind of catalog of all their escapades. See, they learned that true spirituality was walking humbly before God in the power of the Holy Spirit; that's where spirituality is.

Well, there is much more to be said, but I just remind you that perhaps the best and clearest definition of true spirituality comes in the simple statement of Ephesians 5, which says, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." I wish we had time to go into all that that means but allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life is the essential issue; and that comes when you submit yourselves to the Word of God. The path to true spirituality is through the Word, prayer, daily step by step commitment to the Holy Spirit.

Aesop told about a dog who was crossing a bridge with a bone in his mouth. He looked over the edge, saw the reflection in the clear stream. The bone in the water looked better than the one in his mouth, so he gave up the reality for the reflection.

My great fear is that there are many Christians who with great zeal and lacking knowledge are doing the very same thing. A false standard of spirituality will not restrain your flesh; witnesses are abundant to prove that. The only way to restrain your flesh and gain victory is true spirituality. Again I say, the path

is through the Word and prayer to a daily walk with the Spirit. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, just touching these things tonight reminds us that even while we are endeavoring to understand a movement that we feel doesn't honor You we don't want to leave it at that, we want to bring this into our own hearts and ask if we are on the path of true spirituality to the place of true obedience; if we are walking in the Spirit so that we don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Since we are spiritual and the Spirit dwells within us we must walk according to His will. So Father, may the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, and may that Word become the controlling principle that moves through our mind to our volition and yields our body and our mind to the controlling Spirit. May we know true spirituality, we who are spiritual, and give no occasion to the flesh, that we might live to your glory for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The following message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, By John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 90-63, titled "Charismatic Chaos" Part 12. A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 12, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 12**

# ***Does God Promise Health and Wealth?***

**(Part 2)**

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The subject tonight in our study of the Charismatic Chaos is the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity gospel. We can title this message with a question, "Does God Promise Health and Wealth?"

When I was in the Soviet Union a couple of weeks ago they said to me, "We want you to preach on the 'Health and Wealth' gospel." I was talking to hundreds of pastors, and Pastor DuChanchenko (sp.) who heads up the Church there in the Ukraine said, "I want you to preach on the 'Health-Wealth' gospel." I said, "You're not telling me that that's a problem here?" How could anybody go to the Soviet Union and promise people wealth? A whole nation in poverty! He said, "It's here." He said,

Recently, outside of Kiev, a man came from America and he called the people in the city together, and he said [that] he represented Jesus Christ, and he was going to preach. And a great crowd of non-Christian people came to hear him, and he promised them that God wanted them healthy and wealthy! And he said that if they came back the next night the power of God would fall and they would all be healed! And so they came. A large crowd came and nobody got healed--and they spit on the man! They spit on the man!

The kind of foolish promises that are being made that cannot be fulfilled bring a terrible reproach to the name of Christ.

One of the most unusual legacies of World War II has been what are known as the "Cargo Cults of the South Pacific." Anybody who lives in Australia or New Zealand knows about them. Many Aboriginal Island people ranging from northern Australia to Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through the allied armed forces during World War II. The American military, in particular, often used these remote islands in the South Pacific as sites for temporary landing strips and supply depots. And those of you who remember the scenario of World War II--personally I have absolutely no memory of any of it because I was so small, but I have read and I know what occurred--some of you will even remember, and some of you will remember your history books and be reminded of the fact that we were all over the South Pacific on remote little islands with our landing strips and our supply depots so that we could keep our men in the air particularly. And so when Americans and other allies came to these little islands and met these Aboriginal island people they came bringing cargo. They flew in there, created these airstrips so they could fly larger equipment in there. And then they brought in huge warehouses full of cargo and they left as quickly as they came when the war ended. The tribal people had absolutely no opportunity to learn the ways of civilization, but for a brief moment they saw high technology up close. Cargo planes would swoop in from the sky, they would land, they would unload their payload and then takeoff.

Natives that lived in the bush all of a sudden saw cigarette lighters that produced fire instantly and they believed it to be miraculous. They saw large machines come in and push trees down. They went all the way from not even having a wheel or a cart to seeing a Jeep, modern weaponry, refrigerators, radios (talking boxes), power tools, and many varieties of food in all kinds of cans and jars. They were fascinated by all of that and many of those tribal people concluded that the white men were gods. When the war was over and the troops were gone tribesmen built shrines to the "cargo gods." Their tabernacles were perfect replicas of cargo planes, control towers and airplane hangers. They made them out of bamboo and woven material. These structures look remarkably like the control towers and the plane hangers and the planes themselves, but they were really nonfunctional; all they were was shrines or temples to the cargo gods.

On some of those remote islands today the cargo cults still thrive. Some have personified all Americans in one deity and they call that deity "Tom Navy." They pray for holy cargo from every airplane that flies over. They venerate religious relics like Zippo lighters, cameras, eyeglasses, ballpoint pens, nuts and bolts, and so on. As civilization has begun to penetrate some of these cultures their fascination for cargo has not diminished. In fact, missionaries that have been sent to these areas where cargo cults have flourished receive a warm reception at first because the cargo cultist view their arrival as the "Second Coming" of the cargo god. But they are looking for cargo--not gospel. And missionaries say they find it very difficult to penetrate the materialism that is the essence of the cargo cults.

In recent years the Charismatic movement has spawned its own variety of cargo cult. It is called the "Word-Faith Movement"; known otherwise as the "Faith Movement," known as the "Faith Formula," known as the "Word of Faith," "Hyperfaith," "Positive Confession," "Name It and Claim It," "Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Teaching," all of those titles. This subdivision of the Charismatic movement,

listen, is easily as superstitious and materialistic as the "Cargo Cults" of the South Pacific. The Leaders of this Word-Faith movement, including Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Robert Tilton, Fred Price, and Charles Capps (sp.), promise each believer financial prosperity and perfect health; anything less, they argue, is not God's will! And there are many people who "chime" in with this; in fact, if I understand, last week there was a great, great convocation at the church of Fred Price, which espouses this, attended by many, not only Charismatics and Pentecostals but even a leading Presbyterian pastor in our area. They were all there.

The tentacles of this kind of theology has reached out far and wide. They have sought mainstream acceptance and they have managed to build relationships with people, who because of those relationships will not speak the truth against them, and so the thing flourishes like a wildfire. And of course it appeals to people because it demands nothing but faith; it doesn't demand holiness, it doesn't demand devotion or dedication, it only demands faith and it promises that if you have enough you'll get rich and healthy-- that's a popular message.

I suppose that we could say that virtually every false religion ever spawned by man worships a god whose function it is to deliver some kind of "cargo." That is, human religion invariably invents gods for utilitarian reasons. They invent gods that give them what they want. They invent deities to serve them rather than the other way around. The Word-Faith theology has turned Christianity into a system that is no different from the lowest human religions. It is a form of voodoo where God can be coerced, cajoled, manipulated, controlled, and exploited for the Christian's own ends.

I received a mailing sent out by one rather extreme Word-Faith teacher named David Eppley (sp.). A brochure was included with a bar of prayer-blessed soap, quote,

We are going to wash away all bad luck, sickness, misfortunes, and evil! Yes, even that evil person you want out of your life. Jesus helped a man wash blindness from his eyes; I want to help you concerning hexes, vexes, home problems, love, happiness, and joy. (the brochure said).

Inside the brochure were testimonies from people who had been blessed by that ministry. "Door opens to new job!" said one. "An \$80,000 dream comes true!" said another. "Couldn't use my hand for twelve years!" said another. Also inside was a personal letter from the pastor closing with a full page of instructions on how to use the soap. If you used it right it would bring you healing and money,

Now, after you wash the poverty from your hands, take out the largest bill or check you have. That \$100, \$50, or \$20 bill, hold it in your clean hands and say, "In Jesus' name I dedicate this gift to God's work and expect a miracle return of money."

And of course, your largest bill or check must be sent to David Eppley (sp.).

The last paragraph said,

Through this gift of discernment, I see someone sending a \$25 offering and God is showing me a large check coming to them in the next short while I mean "large;" it looks like over \$1,000! I know this sounds strange but you know me well enough to know that I have to obey God when He speaks. I'll be here waiting for your answer.

Frankly, that sounds more like Black Magic. Certainly a more outrageous example than most, but still it reflects a style that is typical of nearly all Word-Faith ministries. If it was just plain hucksterism that would be bad enough. I guess I could tell you honestly, I could take Reverend Ike. I could take Reverend Ike because . . . (I don't know if you know who he is, but if you don't, don't worry about him)--but, I can take Reverend Ike because he uses the same gimmick, but he doesn't make it Christian! What corrupts so devastatingly is to tie this kind of con game into Christ!

Word-Faith teachers have corrupted the heart of New Testament Christianity. They have moved the believers' focus off sound doctrine, worship, service, sacrifice, and ministry; and they have shifted it instead to promised physical, financial, and material blessings. Those blessings are the cargo that God is supposed to deliver to those who know and follow the Word-Faith formula.

Word-Faith writings . . . and there are myriad of these things, you can't even keep up with them. I got a new one this week that somebody sent me to try to help me to see the truth. It's a thick book and it is all about all of these Word-Faith teachers. It has all their pictures on the front. There is almost no end to the proliferation of literature (many trees are dying in this operation to be used for pulp and paper). Word-Faith articles carry titles like, "How to Write Your Own Ticket with God," "Godliness is Profitable," "The Laws of Prosperity," "God's Creative Power Will Work for You," "Releasing the Ability of God Through Prayer," "God's Formula for Success and Prosperity," "God's Master Key to Prosperity," "Living in Divine Prosperity," and so it goes.

In Word-Faith religion the believer uses God, whereas, the truth of Biblical Christianity is--God uses the believer! Word-Faith theology sees the Holy Spirit as a Power to be put to use for whatever the believer wants. The Bible teaches, however, that the Holy Spirit is a person who enables the believer to do whatever God wants. It is absolutely the opposite of Scripture. Many Word-Faith teachers claim that Jesus was "Born Again" so that we might become "little gods." Scripture, however, teaches that Jesus is God and it is we who must be born again.

Frankly, I have little or no tolerance for these deceptions, these corruptions of Scriptures and false claims of the Word faith movement. I have absolutely no constraints on me to speak to this issue because I believe that I am literally bound by my obligation as one called to minister the truth of God to so speak, because this defies everything I understand to be true about Scripture.

The movement [Word-Faith] closely resembles some of the destructive greed sects that ravaged the early church. Paul and other apostles were not accommodating to or conciliatory with the false teachers who propagated ideas like that in their day. They identified them as dangerous false teachers and urged Christians to avoid them. Paul warned Timothy, for example, about "Men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." This isn't anything new. Paul was dealing

with those who thought godliness was a ticket for money. Paul further said to Timothy,

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But flee from these things. [1 Tim 6:9-11, NASB].

These cults are generated, know this, out of a love for money! They develop a religion to accommodate their lusts. Jude wrote of the greed mongers of his day,

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love-feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever . . . They are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. [Jude 11-13, 16 NASB].

There is nothing that I could say that would be as strong as that, and that is out of God's Word. Peter wrote,

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words. [2 Pet 2:1-3, NASB].

Peter went on to say,

Their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep . . . For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, [that is, they entice you by the things you lust for], and they entice those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. [2 Pet 2:3, 18-19, NASB].

You show me a person who preaches the "Money Gospel," the "Money Message," the "Wealth Message," I'll show you a person who has been corrupted by the love of money; that's what Peter is saying. Paul said covetousness is idolatry and Paul forbade the Ephesians to be partakers with anyone who brought either a message of immorality or a message of covetousness (Eph. 5:5-7).

Now the question is, "How closely do modern Word-Faith teachers resemble the greedy false teachers that the apostles described? Is it fair to write the movement off as heretical? As sub-Christian?" Well, I want us to look at that, and let's find out. In some ways I hesitate to label the Word-Faith movement as a

cult only because its boundaries are, as yet, somewhat hazy. Many sincere Christians hover around the periphery of the Word-Faith teaching. It isn't a sort of a bordered, identifiable cult. It is somewhat amorphous and it floats in an almost undefined way and bumps in and out of all kinds of groups of Christians. And so while on the one hand we can't say that everybody that it touches is cultic, all of the elements within it are cultic:

It has a distorted Christology that is a warped view of Christ.

It has a distorted view of man, an exulted view of man.

It has a theology built on human works.

It has a process of sanctification that justifies greed.

It has a belief that new revelation from within the group is unlocking secrets that have been hidden from the Church for years.

It believes that extrabiblical human writings are inspired and authoritative.

It has an exclusivity that compels its adherents to shun any and every criticism of the movement. In fact, as you know, Benny Hinn said if anybody criticizes him he wants, "to get a Holy Ghost machine gun and blow their head off!"

Without some exacting corrections in the movement's doctrinal foundations it will become a clearly identifiable cult, if it is not already so. It certainly is the closest thing on earth to the greed cults of the New Testament era which the apostles bluntly labeled heresy. Now, I know that is a serious verdict, but I think there is ample evidence to bear it out. At almost every turn the Word-Faith movement has tainted, twisted, garbled, misunderstood, corrupted, or obliterated the crucial doctrines of Christian faith. Let me help you with that by looking at some of them.

First of all, The Word-Faith movement has the wrong god! It has the wrong god. I believe that it is fair to say that the god of the Word-Faith movement is not the God of the Bible. Word-Faith teaching, in effect, listen to this, sets the individual believer (are you ready for this?) above God, and turns God into Santa Claus, or a genie, or a valet who is there to do whatever the Christian tells Him. See, these Word-Faith teachers are their own supreme authority. Kenneth Hagin, who is patriarchal in this movement, wrote this booklet called, "How To Write Your Own Ticket With God." He tells about seeing a vision of Jesus and he says to Him,

Dear Lord, I have two sermons I preach concerning the woman who touched your clothes and was healed when you were on earth. I received both of these sermons by inspiration.

I am quoting him. Later on he quotes what Jesus told him in reply, Jesus said,

You are correct, My Spirit, the Holy Spirit, endeavored to get another sermon into your spirit but you failed to pick it up. While I am here I will do what you ask, I will give you that sermon outline. Now, get your pencil and paper and write it down.

That's what Jesus said to him, he says. Hagin claims to have received numerous visions as well as eight personal visitations from Jesus. Hagin has written, "The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity. I never read about it in a book; I got it directly from heaven." That claim is a lie: outright, I'll show you why a little later. You see they believe or they want every body else to believe that God is giving this information to them. Do you understand beloved that if you do not have a closed Canon, and if Scripture did not end with the Book of Revelation, if you believe that God is still giving revelation--there is no way to stop the flood.

Everybody is claiming God speaks to them. Fortunately, for the Word-Faith people, God is telling them exactly what they want Him to say. They have created God in the image that they want Him to be. For example, they have no concept of God as sovereign. Scripture says in Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all." What that simply means is, God's in charge of everybody and everything. God is the blest and only sovereign, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim 6:15), yet in the volumes of Word-Faith material that I have read, I have not found one reference to the sovereignty of God--not one! The reason is clear: they don't believe He is sovereign.

Jesus, according to Word-Faith teaching, has no authority on earth: it is all delegated to the Church. Kenneth Hagin says this in his book entitled, "The Authority of the Believer," which, by the way, has long sections which were taken verbatim from other books written by other people: and he says that he got them from God; it is just not true. But he says that Jesus has no authority, He delegated it all to the Church; we are in charge of God and we are in charge of Jesus.

Furthermore, Word-Faith theology teaches that God is bound by spiritual laws that govern health and prosperity. God is bound by some laws; by some principles. If we say the right words, or if we have the right faith, God is forced to respond however we determine. Robert Tilton claims that God has already committed to take His part in a covenant relationship with us. We can make whatever commitment or promise to Him we want, quote, says Tilton,

Then we can tell God, on the authority of His Word, what we would like Him to do. That's right, you can actually tell God what you would like His part in the covenant to be.

In the Word-Faith system God is not Lord of all: He can't work unless we release Him to work; He is dependent on human instruments; He is dependent on human faith; and above all, He has to act in response to human words to get His work done. Charles Capps (sp.) has written, "It is in your power to release the ability of God." In other words, "God is Stuck--until we speak His orders!" On the other hand, according to Charles Capps (sp.) "Fear activates the devil." If you succumb to fear, even doubting a little, he says,

You've moved God out of it. You have stopped God's ability immediately. Maybe it was just about to come into manifestation, but now you have established Satan's word in the earth, "That it is not getting any better, it is getting worse." You have established his word.

What he is saying is, "If you have fear, you release the devil to work; if you have faith, you release God to work. So if you are afraid of Satan, you have bottled God and set Satan loose," (My, you are a powerful person!). According to Charles Capps, in his book, "The Tongue--A Creative Force," God has turned over His sovereignty, including (listen to this) His creative authority, to people. Capps has written,

In August of 1973 the Word of the Lord came unto me saying, [Just that is frightening. This is the Lord speaking to Charles Capps] "If men would believe me, long prayers are not necessary. Just speaking the Word will bring you what you desire. My creative power is given to man in word form. I have ceased, for a time, from My work and have given man the book of My creative power. For it to be effective man must speak it in faith Jesus spoke it when He was on earth and as it worked then, so it shall work now, but it must be spoken by the body. Man must rise up and have dominion over the power of evil by My words. It is my greatest desire that My people create a better life by the spoken word, for My word has not lost its power just because it has been spoken once. It is still equally as powerful today as when I said, 'Let there be light,' but for My word to be effective, man must speak it; and that creative power will come forth performing that which is spoken in faith."

Simply saying, in other words what he is stating is this, "You have the ability (if you have enough faith) to create with your words. You want money? Create it with your faith filled words. You want healings? Create it with your faith filled words." It escapes my how one of these popular Word-Faith teachers could possibly be 5 Million dollars in debt; can't he just speak it into existence? And then on the other hand, why pray at all if your words have so much creative force? Why pray? What's there to ask for? You really come up with a denial that you need to seek anything from God; after all, God has given the sovereignty to you, He's yielded up His creative power to you; it's not His word anymore, it was His word the first time, it is your word now. Speak it into existence, you don't need Him--you're sovereign.

Another of their teachers, Norval Hayes (sp.), says it is better to talk to your checkbook, talk to your disease, or talk to whatever predicament you're in than to turn to God in prayer! I'm quoting,

You aren't supposed to talk to Jesus about it; you're supposed to talk directly to the mountain in Jesus' Name (whatever the mountain is in your life). Stop talking to Jesus about it; stop talking to anybody else about it; speak to the mountain itself in Jesus' Name. Don't say, "Oh God, help me. Remove this sickness from me," say, "Flu, I'm not going to let you come into my body! Go from me in the name of Jesus! Nose, I tell you, stop running! Cough, I tell you to leave in Jesus' name!" Say, "Cancer, you can't kill me, I will never die of cancer in Jesus' name!" [I'm quoting him further] Do you have a financial mountain in your life? Start talking to your money. Tell your checkbook to line up with God's word. Talk to your business. Command customers to come into your business and spend their money there. Talk to the mountain.

You laugh at this, and I understand that, but there are a lot of people who don't laugh at this--they are believing this. Norval Hayes (sp.) has several publications and one of them titled "Putting Your Angels

To Work" which indicates that you are not only sovereign over this world but you are sovereign over the angelic world as well. Hayes also teaches that believers can exercise dominion over the angels, quote,

Since angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to and for Christians [he reasons], we can learn how to put them into action on our behalf. We believers ought to be keeping those angelic creatures busy! We ought to have them working for us all of the time.

And so I think it is fair to say that Word-Faith theology denies the sovereignty of God, removes the need to pray to God for any relief from burdens or needs and gives the Christian himself both dominion and creative power. In my judgment it is human pride at its ugliest. Worse, it is idolatry and the new idol is self, and God is dethroned. To follow this wrong-God concept a little further, the Word-Faith movement teaches that when you become a Christian you become part of a race of little gods. Kenneth Copeland has explicitly stated what many Word-Faith teachers more subtly imply. This is what Kenneth Copeland writes,

He imparted in you, when you were born again . . . Peter said it just as plain, he said, "We are partakers of the divine nature." That nature is life eternal in absolute perfection, and that was imparted, injected into your spirit-man and you have that imparted into you by God just the same as you imparted into your child the nature of humanity. That child wasn't born a whale, he was born a human--isn't that true? Well now, you don't have a human do you? You are one. And you don't have a god in you--you are one!

Copeland teaches that Adam was created in the god-class; that is, Adam was a reproduction of God! Listen to what he says,

He was not subordinate to God--Adam was walking as a god! What he said "went," what he did "counted"; and when he bowed his knee to Satan and put Satan up above him then there wasn't anything God could do about it because a "god" had placed Satan there. Adam, remember, was created in the god-class, but when he committed high treason he fell below the god-class.

"On the cross," according to Copeland, "Jesus won the right for believers to be born again back into the god-class. Adam was created, not subordinate to God, but as a god; he lost it, and in Christ we are taken back to the god-class." In saying that, Copeland believes that Jesus, quote,

Won healing, He won deliverance, He won financial prosperity, mental prosperity, physical prosperity, family prosperity. He said He would meet my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and I am walking around and saying, "Yes, my needs are met according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Glory to God, I am coveting to the "need meter"; I am coveting to the I AM; Hallelujah! And I say this with all respect so that it don't upset you too bad, but I say it anyway; when I read in the Bible where He says "I AM" I just smile and say "Yes, I AM too!"

That is so blasphemous that it ought to make every true child of God cringe, yet it is typical of Word-Faith teaching. For any human being to call himself the "I AM," "YAHWEH" the eternal saving,

sovereign God, is blasphemy. In the face of criticism for some of his statements about the deity of the believer, Copeland appeared with Paul and Jan Crouch on Trinity Broadcasting Network's program "Praise the Lord!" and he was there to defend his teaching, and this is the following conversation that ensued,

Paul Crouch said: God doesn't even draw a distinction between Himself and us.

Kenneth Copeland said: Never, never, you never can do that in a covenant relationship.

Paul Crouch: Do you know what else that has settled then tonight? This hue and cry and controversy that has been spawned by the devil to try and bring dissension within the Body of Christ that we are gods--I am a little god!

Kenneth Copeland: Yes, yes!

Jan Crouch: Absolutely, He gave us His name.

Kenneth Copeland: The reason we are . . .

Paul Crouch: I have His name! I am one with Him! I'm in covenant relations. I am a little god! Critics be gone!

Kenneth Copeland: You are anything that He is.

Paul Crouch: Yes!

Paul Crouch, head and "On Air" host of Trinity Broadcasting Network and therefore one of the most powerful influential people in religious broadcasting today, has reaffirmed repeatedly his commitment to the "little gods" doctrine of Word-Faith, quoting him,

That new creation that comes in the new birth, is created in His image. It is joined then with Jesus Christ. Is that correct? And so in that sense (I saw this many years ago) whatever that union is that unites Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, He says, "Father, I want them to be one with Me, even as You and I are one in Us," so apparently [that's] what He does: He opens up that union of the very Godhead and brings us into it.

We become part of the Trinity in that view. Other Word-Faith teachers have reiterated the heresy. Charles Capps (sp.) writes,

I have heard people say, "Those who confess God's Word and say the promises of God over and over are just trying to act like God." Yes! That's exactly what we are trying to do, act as God would in a similar situation. What did He do? He spoke the thing desired.

Or O'Palk (sp.), another of them, wrote, "Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we begin to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God." Robert Tilton also calls the believer, "A god kind of creature designed to be as a god in this world. Designed and created by God to be the god of this world." Other of their popular preachers, Maurice Serullo (sp.) had this televised conversation with Dwight Thompson, you see him on Channel 40 frequently,

Maurice Serullo (sp.): See when God created us in His image He didn't put any strings on us--did He? He didn't make us puppets.

Dwight Thompson: No, not at all!

Maurice Serullo: He didn't say, 'Maurice, raise your hand, raise your, you know, and then here we are. We have no absolute, no control over us.

Dwight Thompson: No, no, no!

Maurice Serullo: He made Dwight Thompson, he made Maurice Serullo a small miniature god. Of course! The Bible says that we are created in the image of God, His likeness. Where is that god-likeness? He gave us power. He gave us authority. He gave us dominion. He didn't tell us to act like a man, He told us to act like a god.

Benny Hinn adds,

The new creation is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. The new man is after God, like God, godlike, complete in Jesus Christ. The new creation is just like God. May I say it like this, "You are a little god on earth running around."

And then Hinn responded to criticism of such teaching this way, he said,

Now are you ready for some real revelation knowledge? Ok, now watch this! He laid aside His divine form so one day I would be clothed on earth with the divine form. Kenneth Hagin has a teaching; a lot of people have problems with it, yet it is absolute truth. Kenneth Copeland has a teaching, many Christians have put holes in it, but it is divine truth. Hagin and Copeland say, "You are god, you are gods." "Oh, I can't be God!" Hold it! Let's bring balance to this teaching. The balance is being taught by Hagin; it is those who repeat him that mess it up. The balance is being taught by Copeland, who is my dear friend, but it is those who repeat what he says that are messing it up. You see there brother, when Jesus was on earth, the Bible says that He first disrobed Himself of the divine form. He, the limitless God, became a man that we men may become as He is.

You'll notice in this that they land on the verses that indicate that we enter in and participate in some of the things that are true about God. But they take it to the extreme where we become God. We do participate in the love of God, don't we? And in the righteousness of God, and enjoy the grace of God, but

are not God. Hagin says,

If we ever wake up and realize who we are we will start doing the work that we are supposed to do, because the Church hasn't realized yet that they are Christs, that's who they are. They are Christs.

Now, we are not only God--we are Christ! Thus, have the Word-Faith teachers agreed to dispose God and to put us in His place. From that basic error flow all the fallacies. Why do they teach that health and prosperity are every Christian's divine right? Because, we're God--we deserve it! Right? If I am God I deserve prosperity. Why do they teach that a believer's words have creative and determinative force? Because in their system we're God, and God could speak things into creation, and we're God so we can speak them into creation. They have bought Satan's original lie. The serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die, for God knows that in the day you eat from this fruit, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God." That was a lie. Man will never be like God. We will be a glorified man--not God. The idea that man can be like God, is and always has been the satanic lie. It was the very lie . . . listen to this, [that] brought the devil himself down. He said, "I will be like God."

Two proof texts are often used by the Word-Faith teachers to support their teaching. In Psalm (you need to listen to this, this is their case here), in Psalm 82:6 God says to the rulers of earth, "You are gods; and all of you are sons of the Most High." They quote that all of the time, Psalm 82:6, you might want to turn to it. And we will close with just a look at the two texts they use, and we are going to take it up next week. Psalm 82:6, God says to the rulers of earth, "You are 'gods'; and all of you are sons of the Most High." And so they say, "See, God says we are gods!"

A simple reading of the Psalm however, says something very, very, different than that. If you look at the Psalm it will reveal to you that those words were spoken to ungodly rulers who were on the brink of judgment: ungodly rulers on the brink of judgment. Look at verse 7, (they never want to read verse 7), "Nevertheless, you will die like men; and fall like any one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth." What is this? There is a note of irony. God looks at these rulers and they have been rendering unjust judgments. Back in verse 2 they have been judging unjustly; they have been showing partiality to the wicked. They have been, rather, doing injustice than justice and He says, "Look, in your own eyes you think you are gods, but you are going to die like . . ." what? "Men." How could you ever rip that 6th verse out of that context and make it an affirmation that a Christian has become a god? Far from confirming their godhood, God is condemning them for thinking they were gods!

Word-Faith teachers will immediately turn to their other favorite proof text, John 10:33-34. Guess what? This is where Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6, so if you understand Psalm 82:6 you don't have a problem understanding John 10. "The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy because you being a man make yourself out to be God.'" And then Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your law, 'I said you are gods.'" Don't fail to notice Jesus' purpose for choosing that verse. It would have been a very familiar one to the Scribes and Pharisees. They would have understood that that verse was an condemnation of wicked rulers, and Jesus is simply echoing the irony of the original Psalm. Walter Martin wrote an excellent comment on this, He said, "Jesus mocks the people as if to say, 'You all think you are gods yourselves. What's one more god among you?'" Oh, the irony. You are

going to stone me for claiming to be God, you all are claiming the same thing. What's one more god? The sarcasm.

Walter Martin says, "Irony is used to provoke us, not to inform us. It is not a basis for building a theology." Further he says, "It is also pertinent to an understanding of John 10 that we remember that Satan is called the "ruler of this world" by no less an authority than Jesus Christ, and Paul reinforces this by calling him the "god of this age." We can make a god out of anything: money, power, status, position, sex, patriotism, family, or as in Lucifer's case--an angel. We can be our own god; but to call something deity or to worship it, or to treat it as divine is quite another thing. Then it is being by nature and in essence deity. Jesus is not calling them "God" in the true sense; He is saying that you have made a god out of yourselves just like the people in Psalm 82 who felt the blast of God's judgment. God said to the rebellious Israelites in Isaiah 29:16, "You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered equal with the clay" (Isaiah 29:16). Does the clay think it is equal to the potter?" According to the Word-Faith movement, what's the answer? "Yes, if not superior." They have the wrong god.

Well, they have some other things that are wrong and I'll tell you what they are next Sunday night, and we will start with the fact that they have the wrong Jesus.

Father, even as we talk about these things we are thrown almost into disbelief, not because we are not used to error but we are not used to error being received by people who say they belong to the truth. We are shocked that so many Christians who would affirm their belief in the truth will identify with the terrible heresies of this movement. We feel like evangelical Christianity has become absolutely undefinable, it is so amorphous that it has no boundaries. It is inexplicable. We almost feel like we have to pull out of the whole thing and start all over again. Lord, so many are confused, so many led astray. We just pray that somehow Your truth will reach them and that they will worship you as the sovereign God and not turn You into their valet, but fall on their face in your presence and plead for the privilege to suffer if need be for your sake, sickness, poverty, or death, if You so will. That like the Apostle Paul they would rejoice to suffer, they would be thankful for persecutions, distresses, deprivations, if it is your will because you are sovereign.

Father, help us to know that we are at best men and no more. Men who have been touched with the transforming grace of Christ. Men in whom the Holy Spirit live, but we are men and no more, redeemed men and as men we must be humbled before God. We grieve Father, that You have been so dishonored, so humiliated that such a terrible reproach has come on your Holy Name from those who teach and believe such foolish things. And we ask that You would be exalted and bring a halt to this degrading teaching for the Savior's sake we ask. Amen.

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I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription of the sermon, "Charismatic Chaos" Part 13, to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

## **Charismatic Chaos - Part 13**

# ***Does God Promise Health and Wealth?***

**(Part 2)**

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Tonight we want to go back to our study of the contemporary Charismatic movement. This movement has many fascinations, many unique things. While you are kind of getting your mind geared: Phil Johnson was just telling me (Phil is executive director of Grace to You) and he said the other day a lady called the 800 line and she had good news for us. She said that she was given permission by Robert Tilton (Robert Tilton is one of the leading Charismatic television personalities) to tell everyone that it was revealed to him that "Jesus is coming November 15th" and that she is leaving her entire estate to Grace to You. Can you grasp the implications of that? For those of you who are struggling, it seems to say that we'll be here after He comes and goes! I don't think that she has fully thought it through; I'll put it that way.

Now turning back to our discussion of the Health and Wealth gospel. We started last time to talk about the cargo cults in the South Pacific where there are still Aboriginal people who worship the cargo gods. They developed a religion because during World War II so many big airplanes landed on their islands; they were the first exposure they ever had to modern technology and they thought they were gods who were flying in and delivering all of this cargo, and they developed religions out of this, and today they

have little temples made out of bamboo and other kinds of woven material. Temples that look like control towers, cargo planes, and airplane hangers, and they worshiped the cargo gods. A materialistic kind of religion; they want the cargo gods to come back and deliver them some more Zippo lighters, radios, and nuts and bolts, and tools, and all the things that were landing there in World War II.

I suggested to you that the modern Health, Wealth gospel is nothing but another kind of cargo cult where people are looking for a god who delivers all the goodies that they want. That the essence of the cargo cult was that God is there to provide what we want and the essence of the Health, Wealth gospel is the same: that God is there to provide what we want and frankly what we demand. And I suggested to you last time that all of the elements that are common to the cults exists within the prosperity movement or the Health, Wealth movement: a distorted Christology, an exalted view of man, an erroneous view of God, a theology based on human works, a belief that new revelation is coming and unlocking secrets that have been hidden for years, extrabiblical human writings that they deem inspired and authoritative. All of those are typically cultic features.

Now, I said that we were going to look at some of the aspects of the Health-Wealth gospel and to look at some of the theological keys to understanding them. Last time we discussed the fact that they have the wrong God. They do not understand that God is sovereign, they do not understand that God is able to act independently, they believe man is sovereign: God has given over sovereignty to man and now God is at the mercy of man and if He is going to do anything we have to release Him to do it. Man is sovereign, God has been deposed and man has been put in His place. He [God] is dependent upon human faith, He is dependent most of all on human words, in fact, they go so far as to say we are little gods, and since we are little gods, God has delegated divine authority to us, and just like God spoke and things were created, we now speak and they are created as well. So we have creative power with our words because we are in fact sovereign little gods, and God has delegated sovereignty to us.

We talked about the fact that since they have this view of God there is really no need to pray to God, in fact they say it would be better off to talk to your disease or talk to your wallet then to talk to God because you can speak into existence anything you want with the creative power that you have as a reproduction of God Himself. And thus they have pulled God down and they have elevated man, and we won't go over that in detail anymore than just to review that briefly.

Now secondly, not only do these Health, Wealth preachers and this movement have the wrong God but they have the wrong Jesus, and I want you to listen very carefully to this because it is so important. The Jesus of the Word Faith, the Positive Confession, the Health, Wealth movement is not the Jesus of the Bible, the New Testament. Word Faith teachers say, "Jesus gave up His deity and took on Satan's nature in order to die for our sins." Let me say that again, they say that, "Jesus gave up His deity and took on Satan's nature in order to die for our sins." Kenneth Copeland who is a worldwide proponent of this defends his infamous prophecy that called doubt on the deity of Christ by saying,

Why didn't Jesus openly proclaim Himself as God during His 33 years on earth? For one single reason: He hadn't come to earth as God, He had come as man.

He seems to be saying that Jesus came only as man and not as God. The Word Faith Jesus often sounds like nothing more than some kind of divinely empowered man. Further, quoting from Kenneth Copeland,

Most Christians mistakenly believe that Jesus was able to work wonders, to perform miracles, and to live above sin because He had divine power that we don't have. Thus they have never really aspired to live like He lived.

They don't realize that when Jesus came to earth He voluntarily gave up that advantage, living His life here not as God, but as a man. He had no innate supernatural powers, He had no ability to perform miracles until after he was anointed by the Holy Spirit as recorded in Luke 3:22 [that would be at His baptism]. He ministered as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit.

These statements tell us that Jesus is divested of His deity. Evidently, it matters little to this system whether Jesus was God or man. Further, Kenneth Copeland writes,

The Spirit of God spoke to me and He said, "A born-again man defeated Satan, the first-born of many brethren defeated him." He said, "You are the very image and the very copy of that one." I said, "Goodness gracious sakes alive!" I began to see what had gone on in there. And I said, "Well, now You don't mean--You couldn't dare mean that I could have done the same thing."

And God said, "Oh yeah! If you'd known that--had the knowledge of the Word of God that He did, you could've done the same thing, because you're a reborn man too." And then God said, "The same power that I used to raise Him from the dead, I used to raise you from your death and trespasses and sins. I had to have that copy and that pattern to establish judgment on Satan so that I could recreate a child and a family and a whole new race of mankind." And then God said, "You are in His likeness."

Now this is simply saying, to sum it up, "Jesus came into the world not as God but as a man. As a man He died, and then as a reborn man He lived. And, in fact, He wasn't any different then Kenneth Copeland or a lot of other people." That utterance is obviously blasphemous. It is astonishing to me that anyone with the barest knowledge of Biblical truth could accept it as true revelation, but judging from the response to Copeland's ministry and many others who teach the same thing, hundreds of thousands of people believe this, and they are divesting Jesus of His identity. He is the God-man and to say that He is anything less than the God-man is heresy! And again, I mark for you, note carefully, that in cults it is typical to have an aberrant view of Christ.

The Word Faith movement also moves on to talk about His Atonement in terms that are utterly unfamiliar to orthodoxy. His sacrificial death on the cross was the primary work our Lord came on earth to accomplish. The atonement is the major emphasis of the whole New Testament and is central to everything we believe and everything that we teach as Christians. Yet the Word Faith movement teaches things about the work of Christ that are absolutely aberrant to the point of blasphemy. Copeland says,

Jesus was the first man to ever be borned [sic] from sin to righteousness. He was the pattern of a new race

of men to come. Glory to God! And you know what He did? The very first thing that this reborn man did-- See, you have to realize that He died. You have to realize that He went into the pit of hell as a mortal man made sin. But He didn't stay there, thank God. He was reborn in the pit of hell.

The righteousness of God was made to be sin. He accepted the sin nature of Satan in His own spirit, and at the moment that He did so, He cried, "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

You don't know what happened at the cross. Why do you think Moses, upon the instruction of God, raised a serpent up on that pole instead of a lamb? That used to bug me. I said, "Why in the world have you got to put that snake up there--the sign of Satan. Why didn't you put a lamb on that pole?"

The Lord said, "Because it was the sign of Satan that was hanging on the cross." He said, "I accepted in My own spirit spiritual death, and the light was turned off."

Later in that same message Copeland adds,

The Spirit of Jesus accepting that sin, and making it to be sin, He separated from His God, and in that moment, He's a mortal man. Capable of failure. Capable of death. Not only that, He's fixing to be ushered into the Jaws of hell. And if Satan is capable of overpowering Him there, he'll win the universe, and mankind is doomed. Don't get the idea that Jesus was incapable of failure, because if He had been, it would have been illegal.

What in the world kind of double talk is this? The idea that Jesus is a man, taking on the nature of Satan, going to hell because He is thrown into the pit of hell as a sinner waiting to be reborn and entering into some kind of mortal combat with Satan and the winner gets the universe. All of that is absolutely foreign to what the New Testament teaches about the atoning work of the God-man. And in fact, Copeland has embraced a heresy known as the Ransom theory of the atonement also, that is an old heresy that basically said God has been held up by Satan and until somebody pays Satan a ransom he is not going to let Jesus go, so God was stuck and He had to pay the ransom price for salvation to Satan. Christ's death was that ransom paid to Satan to settle the legal claim the devil had on the human race because of Adam's sin. That view, by the way, contradicts the clear teaching that Christ's death was a sacrifice offered to God not to Satan, read Ephesians 5:2.

Furthermore, Copeland and the Word Faith teachers move outside of orthodoxy and teach that Christ died spiritually. Now we sometimes say that Christ was separated from the Father on the cross and sometimes we say that is a kind of spiritual death, but the reality of it is that Christ did not die spiritually in the sense that His divine spirit went out of existence. It is error to teach that Christ's spirit ceased to exist, "(the light was turned off)" he called it. Or, that He was somehow separated from God and became in an instant a mortal man and worse, took on the nature of Satan, was dragged into hell and tormented for three days and three nights. Fred Price who follows up this same kind of teaching, in a newsletter wrote this:

Do you think that the punishment for our sin was to die on a cross? If that were the case, the two thieves

could have paid your price. No, the punishment was to go into hell itself and to serve time in hell separated from God. Satan and all the demons of hell thought that they had Him bound and they threw a net over Jesus, and they dragged Him down to the very pit of hell itself to serve our sentence.

Two thieves could have paid that price? Could a zillion thieves on a zillion crosses have paid the price of our sins? Obviously not. Jesus' deity and His sinlessness as the only qualified Lamb of God made Him the only person who could have suffered for our sins. To say that it could have been anybody is absolutely ridiculous. You were redeemed with not perishable things, not like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers but with the precious blood as with a Lamb without blemish and spot. The Lamb Christ, the Blood--His Blood. They are confused about who Christ is, they don't know whether He is God or whether He is man, and they are confused about what happened on the cross, the meaning of the atonement.

Copeland also preaches an aberrant view similar to that I noted from Fred Price, quoting Copeland,

Jesus had to go through that same spiritual death in order to pay the price--Now it wasn't the physical death on the cross that paid the price for sins because if it had been, any prophet of God that had died for the last couple of thousand years before that could've paid the price. It wasn't the physical death. Anybody could do that.

What they are teaching is that Jesus' death on the cross didn't save us, what happen was, He went into hell and that's where He won our salvation, but that is not what the Scripture says and that is not what Jesus meant when He said, "It is," what? "Finished!" Now behind these very popular teachings of these two men is the teaching of Kenneth Hagin. Kenneth Hagin says,

Jesus tasted death--spiritual death--for every man. See sin is more than a physical act it's a spiritual act. And so, He became what we were, that we might become what He is, praise God, and so therefore, His spirit was separated from God.

Why did He need to be begotten or born? Because He became like we were, separated from God. Because He tasted spiritual death for every man. And His spirit and inner man went to hell. In my place. Can't you see that? Physical death wouldn't remove your sins. "He's tasted death for every man"--He's talking about tasting spiritual death.

Jesus is the first person that was ever born again. Why did His spirit need to be born again? Because it was estranged from God.

He has Jesus in a prolonged condition of ceasing to be God and being man alienated from God, in hell, trying to "get His act together" in order that He can be reborn.

The Word Faith movement has concocted this strange theology that makes sinners gods and makes the sinless Son of God into a sinner. Such teaching is utterly unbiblical. It demeans our Lord, it demeans His

work, as it is obvious to anyone.

Furthermore, the atonement did not take place in hell. It was completed on the cross when Jesus said, "It is finished" (recorded in John 19:30). First Peter 2:24 says that Christ "bore our sins in His body on the cross," not in hell. Colossians 2:13-14 says He canceled the debt of our sins "and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Ephesians 1:7 says, "We have redemption through His blood ['blood' here refers to His physical death--the actual shedding of His blood on the cross]," and there is our forgiveness. Jesus promised the repentant thief, "Today, you'll be with Me," where? "Paradise," He wasn't in hell for three days. He served notice to hell that the powers of evil were defeated.

The Bible knows nothing of the kind of atonement that exists in this Word Faith teaching. The Bible knows nothing about the kind of Jesus they are talking about either. They have the wrong God and the wrong Jesus.

Thirdly, they have the wrong faith. This is a fascinating and a very central part of their system. Let me help you to understand this. They teach that faith is some kind of law, some kind of inviolable, immutable, unchanging, impersonal law--that it is like gravity. That anybody who gets involved with it gets the same results. I mean, you could take ten people up to the top of a building and you could have three of them that understood the law of gravity, three of them that knew nothing of the law of gravity, and three of them that didn't believe the law of gravity exists, and one person who was deaf, dumb, and blind and didn't know anything, and if they all jumped they would all go down. Why? Because the law of gravity works no matter what you believe. The law of gravity is fixed. It is not a question of faith, it is not a question of anything. You jump it and you go down! And they take that same concept, like the law of gravity, and move it into the spiritual dimension and say faith is like that. It doesn't matter who you are, if you just enact the law of faith it will work.

Pat Robertson, for example, was asked if the laws of the kingdom work even for non-Christians and this is what he wrote in his book called "Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing Questions," he wrote:

Yes. These are not just Christian and Jewish principles, any more than the law of gravity is Christian and Jewish. The laws of God work for anybody who will follow them. The principles of the Kingdom apply to all of creation. And what the law of faith is all about is "If you believe you can have something--you'll get it!" If you believe that you are going to get well--you'll get well. If you believe that you are going to get money--you'll get money. If you believe that you are going to get married--you'll get married, because you are enacting a law and it is an immutable, inviolable law that works for anybody, anytime. It's impersonal, it's fixed.

And what the error of this is, simply stated, is that this puts confidence in the nature of faith rather than in the object of faith. It assumes that there is something inherent in believing, that enacts something, when it isn't true at all. It is not the nature of faith that is effective, it is the object of faith. It is my faith in God that gets results, not my faith in faith. There used to be a song when I was a kid, and it was a pretty popular one, "I Believe!" Do you ever remember that song? "I believe for every drop of rain that falls, a flower grows," and it went on, "I believe....I believe" And that was the whole sentence, "I believe!" And

you kept wanting to say, "You believe what? You believe whom? You believe how?" "No, I believe!" And sometime you hear secular people interviewed and they say, "Well, I am a person with real faith. I am really a believing person." "Oh, good. Well what do you believe?" "Oh, I just believe in believing." "Good!"

You see this is the same kind of secular concept taken over into this movement that says, "If you apply the law of faith, if you just sort of screw up your faith and say, 'I believe,' you'll make it materialize. If you could just eliminate doubt and eliminate all negative thought and just think super positive, and really believe hard (I don't know how hard you have to believe, but harder than most people are able to believe, obviously)." There are some people who get rich in this movement, and you know who they are. Most of the people stay right where they are--just as poor and unhealthy as they were before they learned this stuff.

Faith, according to Word Faith doctrine, is not submissive trust in God; it is not belief in revealed revelation in the Scripture. Faith is a formula by which you manipulate the universe, by which you manipulate things. Charles Capps says,

Words governed by spiritual law become spiritual forces working for you. Idle words work against you. The spirit world is controlled by the word of God. The natural world is to be controlled by man speaking God's words. So, if you just believe and say it with your mouth you'll make it happen [that's your creative power again].

As the name "Word Faith" implies, this movement teaches that faith is a matter of what we say more than in whom we trust or what truths we embrace and affirm in our hearts. A favorite expression in the Word Faith movement is "positive confession." Have you heard of that? It refers to the Word Faith teaching that your words will create, they have creative power. They say, "What you say you create!" So if you believe it strongly enough to speak it, you'll create it. You will create your riches. You will create your health. You will get out of your wheel chair. It determines everything that happens to you they say. Your confessions, based upon your faith in faith, will bring things to pass, and God has to act because it is a law. Whether you are a Christian, Jewish, or Non-Christian it's going to work.

Kenneth Hagin writes, "You can have what you say. You can write your own ticket with God. And the first step in writing your own ticket with God is: Say it." What they are trying to do is to get you to say it, and say it, and say it, and say it, until you finally convince yourself you believe it. And then supposedly once your saying it becomes believing it, you will create it. He later says, does Kenneth Hagin:

If you talk about your trials, your difficulties, your lack of faith, your lack of money--your faith will shrivel and dry up. But, bless God, if you talk about the Word of God, your lovely Heavenly Father, and what He can do--your faith will grow by leaps and bounds.

So you just have to talk about it--talk about it. In his little booklet called "How To Write Your Own Ticket With God," Hagin's supposedly inspired four-point sermon is: Say it, do it, receive it, and tell it. Hagin claims Jesus told him, "If anybody, anywhere, will take these four steps or put these four principles

into operation, he will always have whatever he wants from Me or God the Father." Write your own ticket! The idea of course has bred superstition, terrible disappointment, and tragic things. Magical incantations is all they are, it's a form of Voodoo. It has no value beyond that.

Charles Capps warns against the dangers of speaking negative confessions, he says:

We have programmed our vocabulary with the devil's language. We have brought sickness and disease into our vocabulary and even death. The main word so many people use to express themselves is death--the word, "death."

"I am just dying to do that." They will say, "I'm going to die if I don't. That just tickled me to death."

Now that, my friend, is perverse speech. That's contrary to God's Word. Death is of the devil. . . . We need not "buddy-

up" with death. All men are going to die soon enough, so don't start "buddying up" to it now.

In other words, you don't want to say those words, because it might happen. That's how powerful you are--you could kill yourself!

Positive confession, listen, would rule out the confession of sin, wouldn't it? Word Faith books on prayer, Word Faith books on spiritual growth are utterly lacking in any teaching about confessing sin. Of course, they undermine the crucial teaching of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

In fact, positive-confession encourages people to absolutely ignore their sins and deny their reality. Doesn't it? You don't want to mention anything negative. It has produced multitudes of people who perpetually wear these emotionless smiles out of fear. Fear that a negative confession might bring them bad fortune and so they may be piling up sin which is never ever dealt with. This is like the Hindu view of "Karma" or some pagan concept of bad luck, i.e., "I don't want to say that or it might bring me bad luck." Hagin admits that he feels that way himself (I'm quoting him):

I wouldn't tell anybody if I had a doubt-thought, or a fear-thought [he won't say a sin-thought or a sin]. I wouldn't accept it. I wouldn't tell somebody if the thought came to me--and you know the devil can put all kinds of thoughts in your mind. We are a product of WORDS. Did you ever stop to think that the Bible teaches that there is a health and a healing in your tongue? [So he says you must never say things that are negative].

I never talk of sickness. I don't believe in sickness. I talk health. I believe in healing. I believe in health. I never talk sickness. I never talk disease. [He's just talking sickness and talking disease]. I talk healing.

I never talk failure. I don't believe in failure. I believe in success. I never talk defeat. I don't believe in

defeat. I believe in winning, hallelujah to Jesus!

Now, they won't say the word sin. They won't say we never talk sin, but they never talk sin. That perspective is rife with obvious problems. Bruce Barron tells of one Word Faith church where

The pastor rose sheepishly to instruct his congregation on a ticklish concern. Some of the church members, he had heard, were spreading contagious diseases among the church's little ones by bringing their sick babies to the nursery. Against the nursery volunteers' protests, these parents were positively confessing that their children were well. Since the parents had claimed their healing, there was nothing to worry about. They may have been dismissing those persistent whines and coughs as lying symptoms, but those lying symptoms proved to be contagious, and only an announcement from the pulpit could succeed in putting an end to the problem.

Foolish! Word Faith denial of diseases and problems as "lying symptoms" robs believers of an opportunity to minister with compassion and understanding to suffering people. Would you like to be in a Word Faith Church and have the gift of showing mercy, and try to find somebody who would admit they needed it? You might look a long time because everybody would be running around and saying, "I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm well, I'm whole, I'm healed, I'm rich!"

How are you going to help somebody when nobody is allow to talk about anything? How can you help someone whose symptoms you believe are lies from Satan--or worse, the result of sinful unbelief, that anytime somebody's sick it's because they are a sinful unbeliever? Consequently, many Word Faith devotees tend to be unfeeling, callous, indifferent, even to the point of being coarse and abrasive toward people they assume don't have enough faith to claim a healing.

Bruce Barron tells of a pastor and his wife, unable to bear children, who

"were told by a member of their church that they needed to 'confess' a pregnancy and display their faith by purchasing a baby stroller and walking down the street with it!" Now, that is pretty callous, don't you think? A few years ago I received a heart-rending letter from a dear woman who was deceived by "positive confession" theology, believed God wanted her to write everyone she knew with a baby announcement for the child she was hoping to conceive. She was incapable of having children but she sent out all these baby announcements. Months later she had to write to everyone again to explain that the expected "faith baby" didn't come. She was quick to add, however, that she was still claiming a pregnancy by faith, and she was fearful that someone might take her second letter as a "negative confession." Just the normal hurts and heartaches of life you can't even deal with!

Kenneth Hagin seems callous even about the death of his own sister from lingering cancer. He writes:

My sister got down to 79 pounds. The Lord kept telling me that she was going to die. I kept asking the Lord why I couldn't change the outcome. He told me she had had five years in which she could have studied the Word and built up her faith (she was saved), but she hadn't done it. He told me she was going

to die, and she did. This is a sad example, but it's true.

That's pretty callous isn't it? Word Faith theology makes the healer a hero when miraculous cures are claimed, but always blames the seeker for a lack of faith when a healing does not happen. Hagin describes an incident when he was attempting to heal an arthritic woman. Her disease had crippled her so badly that she was unable to walk. He became frustrated at her unwillingness to let go of her wheel chair.

I pointed my finger at her and said, "Sister, you don't have an ounce of faith, do you?"

Without thinking, she blurted out, "No, Brother Hagin, I don't! I don't believe I'll ever be healed. I'll go to my grave from this chair." She said it, and she did it. And we weren't to blame.

Remember, positive confession teaches people that their words are determinative. God is not the object of their faith and God is not the force in their life. Word Faith devotees learn to put their faith in their own words. Hagin bluntly says, "faith in [their] own faith." He has a book titled, "Having Faith in Your Faith." What this is is idolatry. This is having faith in you, which makes you what? God!

Try to follow his logic as he attempts to substantiate this idea. Here's what he writes:

Did you ever stop to think about having faith in your own faith?

Evidently God had faith in His faith, because He spoke the words of faith and they came to pass. Evidently Jesus had faith in His faith, because He spoke to the fig tree, and what He said came to pass.

In other words, having faith in your words is having faith in your faith.

That's what you've got to learn to do to get things from God: Have faith in your faith. It would help you to get faith down in your spirit to say out loud, "Faith in my faith." Keep saying it until it registers in your heart. I know it sounds strange when you first say it; your mind almost rebels against it. But we are not talking about your head; we're talking about faith in your heart. As Jesus said, ". . . and shall not doubt in his heart. . . ."

What is that? Once again you will notice that he manages to depreciate the Father and Son by saying God has faith and Christ has faith. Can we accurately speak of the faith of an omniscient, sovereign God? He turns faith, moreover, into some kind of magical formula and our words into an abracadabra by which we "get things from God" like rubbing a magic lamp. There is no biblical basis for any of these ideas about faith. The only appropriate objects of our faith are God and His infallible Word, His Son, and His Spirit.

Nevertheless, these Word Faith believers view their positive confessions

as an incantation by which they conjure up whatever they want. Kenneth Hagin says, "Believe it in your heart; say it with your mouth. That is the principle of faith and you can have what you say." Such

teachings have led many people into gross materialism. I'll be real honest with you, I personally believe that in many of the cases of these leaders this is simply a theology developed to support their materialism--that's all.

John Avanzini, one of the lesser-known Word Faith teachers, spent an evening on Trinity Broadcasting Network arguing that Jesus was actually rich. He pointed to Judas's role as treasurer and said, "You've got to handle lots of money to need a treasurer." More recently, as a guest on Kenneth Copeland's broadcast, Avanzini said he believes Scripture teaches that Jesus had a big house and wore designer clothes. All of that is touted as justification for the Word Faith teachers' lavish lifestyle and materialistic bent.

Robert Tilton goes a step further, he said this: "Being poor is a sin." I would hate to take that message to the Soviet Union and give that to the Church. He said, "My God's rich! And He's trying to show you how to draw out of your heavenly account that Jesus bought and paid for and purchased for you at Calvary." Tilton says, "New house? New car? That's chicken feed. That's nothing compared to what God wants to do for you." How is this cargo to be obtained? Well, Tilton suggests that his followers make a "vow of faith" in the form of a gift to his ministry. This is what he says:

I like a thousand-dollar vow, because I don't like half-hearted people, lukewarm, just, "Well, I'll do a little . . ." I like a thousand-dollar vow of faith. . . . I'm not talking to you that's got it. You that's got it don't pay a bit of attention to me. I'm talking to you that don't have it, and I'm showing you how you can get it! Yes, the Lord's work gets a portion of it. But you get the biggest portion. You get the biggest blessing. I'm trying to talk you out of that dump you're in! I'm trying to talk you into a decent car!... I'm trying to help you! Quit cursing me! Quit cursing me! God, what will pull this blessing from you? I am a blessing. I have been blessed supernaturally by God. I bring a blessing to you this day, and I know it, and my responsibility is to take it to you.

Then Tilton encourages his listeners to pray the prayer of faith, "not one of those, 'Lord, if it be Thy will--' I know what the will of God is when it concerns healing, and prosperity, and divine direction.... I don't have to pray a prayer of doubt and unbelief." In other words, Robert Tilton wants you to make a thousand-dollar vow of faith to his ministry, especially if you can't afford it. He doesn't want you to pray for God's will on the matter. After all, you can demand what you want and God must give it to you. What's the difference what God's will is? Set your vow at a thousand, and demand that God provide the money, send it to him and wait to get rich. And as I said, some people are getting rich and a lot of people are a thousand-dollar poorer.

Richard Roberts, echoing his father's "seed-faith" concept, urged viewers to "sow a seed on your MasterCard, your Visa or your American Express, and then when you do, expect God to open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing." Oral Roberts once mailed out plastic bags full of "holy water" from the River of Life Fountain at ORU. To demonstrate how to use the stuff, he poured a bag of it over his own wallet on his television program while standing knee deep in the fountain. And that is supposed to be the key to getting your cargo delivered.

Why do so many believers (supposed believers) try this stuff and don't get rich? Fred Price explains:

If you've got one-dollar faith and you ask for a ten-thousand-dollar item, it ain't going to work. It won't work. Jesus said, "according to your faith," not according to God's will for you, in His own good time, if it's according to His will, if He can work it into His busy schedule [see him mocking God and mocking the concept of God's will]. He said, "According to your faith, be it unto you."

Now, I may want a Rolls Royce, and don't have but bicycle faith.

Guess what I'm going to get? A bicycle [But guess what he's (Fred Price) got?].

Thus God's ability to bless us supposedly hangs on our faith. Note that both Price and Tilton recoil from the idea of praying, "If it be Thy will." But that is exactly what the Bible teaches, "This is the confidence (1 John 5:14) which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything [what] according to His will, He hears us." Hagin goes so far as to claim that no such truth is taught in the New Testament:

Because we didn't understand what Jesus said, and because we've been religiously brainwashed instead of New Testament-taught, we watered down the promises of God and tacked on something that Jesus didn't say, and added on something else to it: "Well, He will all right if it's His will, but it might not be His will," people have said. And yet, you don't find that kind of talk in the New Testament. [It's in mine!]

Hagin has also written, "It is unscriptural to pray, 'If it is the will of God.' When you put an 'if' in your prayer, you are praying in doubt." Romans 8:27 tells us that even the Holy Spirit "intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

Far from stressing, beloved, the importance of wealth, the Bible warns against pursuing it, doesn't it? Believers, especially leaders in the Church, are to be free from the love of money. The love of money leads to all kinds of evil. "Beware" Jesus warned, "and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). In sharp contrast to the Word Faith gospel's emphasis on gaining money and possessions in this life, Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves" What? "treasures on earth." And He also said in Matthew 6:24: "You can't serve God and money."

This is really not Christianity, this is not New Testament theology. The concept that the universe (God) is governed by some impersonal spiritual law is not biblical. It is a denial of God's sovereignty and God's providence. It is really a form of deism, if a somewhat ignorant one. Furthermore, the notion that we can use words mystically and magically to control reality is

far removed from the biblical pattern of faith, and believe me has more in common with Christian Science than Christianity. Most Word Faith teachers vehemently deny that their teachings have anything to do with Christian Science or other metaphysical cults, but they do. I don't know how you can distinguish between the two.

Now, I want to say something and I want you to listen to it. The Word Faith movement: Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Fred Price, Charles Capps, Robert Tilton, et al, and it goes on and on from there, can be traced all the way back. Every major figure in the movement was mentored by Kenneth Hagin or one of his close disciples. Every doctrinal distinctive of the movement is traceable to Kenneth Hagin who's in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

There is a book called, "A Different Gospel," by D. R. McConnell. And one of the things that is very fascinating in that McConnell points out that Kenneth Hagin gleaned these teachings from the writings of a faith evangelist named E. W. Kenyon. In fact, I quoted earlier to you that Kenneth Hagin said that he got all of this from the Lord, the truth is that he plagiarized much of it. In fact, McConnell states that Hagin plagiarized the writings of a Christian Missionary Alliance minister named John A. MacMillan. A man named W. R. Scott gives solid evidence that these accusations are true as well. Specifically, it is incontrovertible that Hagin lifted at least three-quarters of his book "The Authority of the Believer" verbatim from MacMillan's magazine article of the same title. Scott also documents Hagin's plagiarism of Finis Jennings Dake, who wrote a very interesting study Bible called the "Dake Study Bible," in other words, huge sections of the writings of Hagin have been plagiarized from other sources.

He not only borrowed ideas from Kenyon; but McConnell includes several pages of column-by-column text that proves beyond question that Hagin repeatedly plagiarized long sections of the writings of E. W. Kenyon, word-for-word-for-word-for-word-for-word. And so there is a track, there's a kind of historical track. Kenyon's roots were in the metaphysical cults. He was a faith-healer not in the Pentecostal tradition, but in the sense of Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science. He attended a college that specialized in training lecturers for the metaphysical science cults. And he imported and adapted into his system most of the essential ideas these cults propagated. And Hagin absorbed them from E. W. Kenyon and in many cases word-for-word.

The truth of it is, McConnell's book is a devastating expose' (the book entitled "A Different Gospel" published by Peabody in 1988), it is a devastating expose' of the Word Faith movement. It demonstrates irrefutably that Word Faith teachers owe their ancestry to groups like Christian Science, Swedenborgianism, Theosophy, Science of Mind, and New Thought--not classical Pentecostalism. It isn't classical Pentecostalism, it really is not Christianity at its core, it is corrupt, it is cultish, not Christian.

It is a mongrel system, it is a blend of mysticism, dualism, and neo- gnosticism that borrows from the metaphysical cults. Its perverse teachings are causing untold harm to the Christian church, as you obviously know. It is, I believe, in the words of Peter a "destructive or damnable heresy"

Despite what Word Faith teachers say, God is not just a source of cargo--is He? We are His servants, not He ours. He has called us to live lives of loving service and worship, not godlike supremacy. He blesses us, but not always materially. In no way can we "write our own ticket" and expect him to follow the script. The life of a Christian is a life spent in pursuit of God's will--not a life in which God is chasing around trying to fulfill our will. No one who rejects that fundamental concept of the relationship to the believer, between the believer and the true God, the true Christ, and true Faith can genuinely be called Christian.

Well, you can see the seriousness of this. Right? If you have the wrong God, and the wrong Jesus, and the wrong Faith, it's hard to have the right salvation, if not impossible.

In conclusion, there are a few things that I need to say, lest I be misunderstood. We have covered a lot of things in these weeks and I want to wrap it up, and I want you to listen very carefully, because I do not want to be misunderstood.

I know many charismatics who are committed, consistent, honorable believers devoted to the Word of God. Many Pentecostals are godly people. Numerous charismatic churches and individual Pentecostal-Charismatic believers reject many of the errors which I have highlighted in this series. We would find many Pentecostals, many Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and believers who would agree with our assessment of many of these movements. And I am not attempting to color all these people the same color. Within the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement there is everything from evangelical orthodoxy all the way over to rank heresy.

I am grateful that some in the Pentecostal tradition have the courage to confront error in their movement and call all charismatics to a biblical

perspective--and I wish more of them would do that. I am grateful for those who will speak out against these evil things. One of the pamphlets that first alerted me to the terrible, terrible teaching in the Health-Wealth movement was written by Chuck Smith, pastor of Calvary Chapel, a straightforward critique of charismatic extremism. There are many like him who have taken their stand and I thank God for their courage and their desire to be biblical, and I don't want for any moment for people to think that I don't believe there are such people in that Pentecostal tradition because, in fact, there are. But listen carefully.

I also believe that the seeds of these errors that they wish to fight are sometimes inherent in the very doctrines that they believe. If you believe that the Baptism of the Spirit is subsequent to and separate from salvation, you have now created two classes of believers. If you believe in mystical experience, transcendent esoteric kinds of supernatural things, then what you will do is depreciate study, spiritual discipline and the means of grace by which you grow. If you exalt feeling you will denigrate reason, and open the mind and the spirit to powers that people cannot understand or deal with. As long as these kind of things lie at the core of Pentecostal tradition the potential for disaster is there, and if you believe that God is still giving revelation of any kind--the lid is off.

This book is not only a statement of truth to people who already believe it but an appeal to my charismatic friends to examine what they believe, as well as an appeal to non-charismatics to see the difference and to see that the differences are not inconsequential.

A final thought, many people who read my book and who listen to these tapes like will be concerned about its effect on the unity of the body of Christ. I want you to know something, I have no desire to place a gulf between charismatic and non-charismatic believers. I have no desire to make a rift between those segments of the Church. May I say to you--that rift is already there and the only way that you can avoid

its reality is just flatly deny it or refuse to recognize it. My concern is to call the church to unity around the truth. Believe me the most serious damage done to the church by the charismatic movement has been precisely in the matter of unity. Who knows how many thousands of churches have split over these issues? The number would stagger us all. Charismatic doctrine in itself is schismatic, because it erects a fence between the common ordinary believer and those who have leaped up to the higher levels. Thus the partition between charismatics and non-charismatics was actually put in place by the charismatic system itself.

And there is a second tendency that compounds the problem, and that is the disposition of many charismatics who, in the name of unity, are willing to embrace everyone and anyone--even if it means overlooking doctrine. So on the one hand if you say you don't believe what they believe they'll create a schism, but on the other hand, if you will tolerate what they believe they'll accept you no matter what you believe. Do you understand that? They have unwittingly succeeded in becoming the kind of worldwide ecumenical force that many liberals envisioned the World Council of Churches would become. They have become the ecumenical movement of the world--the liberals couldn't pull it off! Charismatics are doing it, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Christians, Protestants, and all kinds of sects, isms, and schisms are all uniting under the charismatic banner. Far from being a positive corollary to the movement's growth, this ecumenical influence may well prove to be the most potentially disastrous long-term effect of the charismatic phenomenon. It is disastrous because as long as you'll tolerate what they do they will take you in.

One writer pointed out the inconsistency of the charismatic movement's marriage with ecumenism, listen to this, this is Thomas Edgar:

Is it not inconsistent that a movement which claims to be in direct contact with the Holy Spirit, to have all the gifts such as prophecy, apostleship, and the word of knowledge, to communicate directly with God by tongues-speaking and other means, can at the same time include Roman Catholics, conservative and liberal Protestants, amillennialists, premillennialists, Calvinists, Arminians, those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and those who reject Christ's vicarious atonement on the cross?

That's a fair question. If they've got all this revelation certainty they ought to be able to sort that group out. Further, Thomas Edgar writes:

Apparently the Holy Spirit is not concerned with communicating any information to correct all these differences, many of which are crucial and some of which are incorrect. All this direct communication with the Spirit has apparently done nothing to correct even basic errors. It has not produced unity among charismatics regarding the nature and purpose of many of the gifts. This movement has solved no theological issue, produced no advance in biblical knowledge, and has not produced more spiritual Christians. Would such an effusion of the genuine Spirit of God produce so little?

Wouldn't you assume that if this movement was really feeling the full power of the Holy Spirit that the Spirit would be delivering them some sound doctrine? Gordon Clark has also written about the dangers of

charismatic ecumenism. He quoted an article from a charismatic magazine celebrating the inroads Pentecostalism is making into Catholicism, then he said this, this is Gordon Clark:

Several things immediately strike any reader who is not asleep. First, the tongues experience is tremendously important. If it is not true to say that nothing else matters, it nonetheless seems true to say that nothing else matters very much. Speaking in tongues is the chief mark of a dedicated Christian. The clear implication is that the worship of the virgin Mary is unobjectionable, if one speaks in tongues. There is little point in justification by faith alone, one can accept merit from the treasury of the Saints, transubstantiation can be acknowledged; if only one speaks in tongues. Still more fundamental, one can place tradition on a level with Scripture and even assert new revelations from God, if only one speaks in tongues. The Pentecostal minister [mentioned in the article in question], note well, said, "There has been no attempt to proselyte Roman Catholics." In other words, Romanism is acceptable, if only one speaks in tongues.

You see the point is, Charismatic ecumenism is steadily eroding the identity of biblical Christianity. In Asia, shocking new charismatic cults are springing up, blending Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and other teachings with Western Charismatism. The charismatic movement as a whole is entirely unequipped to defend against such influences. How can they confront errant groups--even ones that are overtly heathen? Listen to this. For in the charismatic movement, unity is a question of shared religious experience, not doctrine. If doctrine doesn't matter, then why not embrace Buddhist Charismatics? And that is exactly what is happening.

And so while charismatic doctrine tends to be divisive among groups that are orthodox, it is not divisive among groups that are heterodox. They are building bridges to the false religions and cutting off the truth. Well, it is a serious issue and we need to know as we have been learning what the Word of God has to say.

The only appropriate response to all of this, very simple, is a return to this Book. Right? Everything is tested by this. The sad truth is, the legacy of the Charismatic movement has been chaos and doctrinal confusion. Their approach to spirituality is unsound and fraught with potential disillusionment, and some of the people in the movement are in despair, disappointed, defeated, and some of them are desperate. The spiritual "good life" that they hear about all the time never seems to happen and they are looking for the key to real Christian life. I would encourage you, in love, to take on the responsibility, graciously, to evangelize these people, and if, in fact, they do know Christ, show them the true path to spiritual blessing.

Father, we thank you tonight for this wonderful time we have shared. Thank you for the clarity with which your Word speaks to matters such as this. For those who love Christ, who are our brothers and sisters in this movement, we pray, God, show them the truth, that they might find the path of true spirituality and gain victory over the flesh and true joy and blessing.

For those in the movement, who under the illusion that they are saved, when in fact, they are not, may they see the true God, the true Christ, and exercise true faith.

God we pray, somehow, You would silence those who speak error and give voice to those who speak the truth. To this end we pray that You might be glorified. In the Savior's Name. Amen.

**Transcribed and added to Bible Bulletin Board's "MacArthur Collection" by:**

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The following excerpt from a message was delivered at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, by John MacArthur Jr. It was transcribed from the tape, GC 70-11, titled "Questions and Answers." A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412 or by dialing toll free 1-800-55-GRACE.

I have made every effort to ensure that an accurate transcription of the original tape was made. Please note that at times sentence structure may appear to vary from accepted English conventions. This is due primarily to the techniques involved in preaching and the obvious choices I had to make in placing the correct punctuation in the article.

It is my intent and prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this transcription to strengthen and encourage the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Tony Capoccia

## ***New Revelation***

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Question: "How would you reply to a believer in the Charismatic movement who agrees that revelation cannot be added to Scripture, but would still argue that God still gives words of knowledge in the church for direction, as long as it falls in line with Scripture?"

Answer: I think in answering a Charismatic there are a number of ways. My book on the Charismatics goes into that in some detail, but revelation is revelation. If a person says, "I am getting direct words of wisdom, knowledge, [or] revelation from God," then that equates with Scripture, in the sense that it is the pure, unadulterated true revelation of God. So it confuses the issue. We have, according to what Jude said, "A faith once for all delivered to the saints." We have according to what John writes in Revelation, a revelation which does not permit addition, "If anything is added, it shall be added to the person the plagues that are written in the book."

The idea that God is giving revelation and that it is somehow not equal to Scripture, or not on a par with Scripture poses some difficulties. If it absolutely true and divine and from God, then it is divine revelation. God reserved divine revelation for special times, which were encompassed in the written word, and since that time revelation has ceased. Let me give you an illustration of that.

At the end of the Old Testament era there was a 400 year period in which there was no revelation, and then God spoke again--in the New Testament. So having a time period in which there is no revelation is not new--when God completed the Old Testament He stopped speaking, and then He spoke again in His Son, Hebrews 1 says. I believe when He completed the New Testament, He ceased to give revelation, and we have the "Once for all delivered to the saints faith."

Furthermore, I would say to a Charismatic the same thing that they say to me all the time whenever I've talk to them, "How do you know it's from God?" Inevitably, they will say, "Well, we think it's from God," because they can't know. Why? Because it was very, very clear in the New Testament era who the prophets of God were; who the Apostles of Christ were, and the Word came through recognized authorities. Today, anybody and his brother might get a revelation from God, and on

what basis are we to assume it's from God? Is it attendant with signs and wonders? Can they heal the sick? Can they raise the dead? Can they cast out demons at a word; authoritatively like Jesus and the Apostles did? Those were the signs of an Apostle.

See, anyone who had the ability to give revelation had to be accredited, and the accreditation was, according to 2 Corinthians 12, the signs of an Apostle. It was known to all who these people were or the fact that they were Apostles or they were those who were associated with the Apostles. So I think it is very, very important to understand that,

1. Revelation ceased.

2. Even when it was being given--not everybody got it. And it never was something that God just passed out indiscriminately to all kinds of people.

So I think that those would be the approaches that I would take.

I remember reading a book that was published by one of the Pentecostal presses in our country, in which it said this pastor was pleading for people to stop standing up in churches and saying "I have a Word from the Lord." And he said, "We know that it is from the Lord or it isn't, but we don't know how to know which!" It is very confusing. This pastor gave an illustration of a church that was in the process of calling someone to be their pastor, and some lady stood up and said, "I have a Word from the Lord, 'This is the man.'" Immediately it threw the church into chaos, because they didn't know whether it was from the Lord or not. That's very typical, very typical.

I know very well a man who took me into his office, a very well-known Charismatic pastor, and said, "God had given him a vision." And he showed me on a board the vision that God had given him for an area of the city, which the Lord had set aside for him. Within five years that vision was gone; that board had disappeared in the trash barrel somewhere and he had a new one. This would be a man that everyone would assume if any body was going to be able to know if he got a revelation--he might. But again, it is very whimsical.

It is very frightening also to say you, "Have a Word from the Lord." In the Old Testament if you said you, "Had a Word from the Lord," and it was tested and found to be not from the Lord you were killed. And that's how important the issue is. Because you can't have people running around loose saying, "God told them this, and God told them that." And so before anyone would ever say anything like that, they would want to take very careful stock of the issues at hand.

Furthermore, are we to assume that somehow the Spirit of God can't do His work, unless He gives revelation to some people; unless He give revelation indiscriminately to all kinds of people? I think not. Furthermore, it seems to me of grave concern that those people who are getting revelation, tend to be in a movement which is the most biblically illiterate to be real honest with you. They don't know theology; they don't know doctrine; they don't know how to interpret the Scripture very well. And because of that lack of content they fall into a mystical category, because they are not able to carefully exposit the Word of God. Without that content orientation they fall into the category of looking for an experience. I'll give you an illustration of it.

I was watching the television program "Today" from "Church on the Way." There was a guy singing a song, and the song went like this, "When there are no answers there is Jesus," and he went on to say, "When there are no answers there is Jesus." I thought to myself, "What in the world does that mean?" Does that mean that you can either go with a cognitive approach and find answers to questions, or you can junk just that and grab Jesus? You see that is a very mystical approach to truth. "Where there are no answers--there is Jesus?" Wait a minute, that's abandoning the search--for an experience. The song should say, "When you're looking for the answer--Jesus has it." The Bible has the answer, but it is a very experiential kind of milieu in which many of those dear people exist. I

think they substitute those revelations very often for understanding. So I think there are a lot of ways to approach that, and I don't say that with unkindness. I say it because I believe that it is true and it is correct.

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