

The Spirit of Truth vs The Spirit of Error

By Mel C. Montgomery

In another article, “Lakeland Revival: Our Spiritual 9/11” I dealt with how the collapse of the Lakeland Revival served also to discredit and shatter the Apostolic and Prophetic Movements. Although we will not revisit the Lakeland Revival in detail in this article, I feel there is a need to offer disillusioned Christians an explanation concerning all the false prophecies that occurred at and about Lakeland. To do so, we will begin by briefly outlining what occurred at Lakeland and then move on to explaining how the false prophecies occurred.

Brief Review of Lakeland

The Lakeland Revival broke out during the meetings of Todd Bentley which began in Lakeland Florida in April of 2008. News of the revival spread and was hyped continuously by GOD-TV and others. The Apostolic Movement via C.Peter Wagner and the International Coalition of Apostles sought to become involved, and chose to jump to center stage at Lakeland by offering a public endorsement/ commissioning service to Todd Bentley--a man whom none of them actually knew. Robert Ricciardelli, who had investigated the revival in behalf of Charisma Magazine, and who was a member of ICA, informed the leaders of his findings: that Todd Bentley was a “pathological liar”--these are the words of Bentley's own staff members, not mine--that the revival consisted of gross exaggerations and blatant lies, and that Todd was drinking heavily and was involved in adultery with a female staff member--his second adulterous affair within three years. The leaders refused to listen, and instead warned Ricciardelli to remain quiet. However, Robert eventually went public with his knowledge. But before he did, many of the leaders of the Apostolic and Prophetic Movements--most of whom knew the revival was a charade--flew to Lakeland, and in a lavish commissioning service they heartily endorsed Bentley, praising his “virtue,” his “integrity,” and his “purity,” prophesying that Bentley and the revival was only beginning and would continue unabated to sweep the world.

Please view the commissioning service and listen to the the numerous false prophecies for yourself. Each of the first three videos are 10 minutes long, and the fourth video is about 3 minutes long. Here are the videos of the Commissioning Service:

Part I: www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVdY9ufJmz8

Part II: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-A05WQYi7aQ

Part III: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjl5wKso9eU

Part IV: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAnNSiZfgvI

Unscriptural Aspects of the Commissioning Service

This commissioning service violates the clear directives of Scripture in two ways:

One, Paul gives a clear command concerning how many prophets are to prophesy or speak in one service:

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (I Cor. 14:29).

The Bible places the number of prophets to prophesy or minister in a service to only two or three. In these videos you see not 2 or 3 but numerous “apostles” and “prophets” speaking or prophesying over Todd. In these videos, when Che Ahn asks the assembled “apostles” and “prophets” to step forward if they have a “prophetic word” for Todd, ten individuals line up and speak to and/or prophesy over Todd. One woman even shakes uncontrollably and screams a prophecy at Todd in the third video. This is blatantly unscriptural behavior, a reproach to Jesus Christ, and a disgrace to the Spirit of God.

Two, Paul gives a clear command on how sin in leadership is to be dealt with:

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”—I Timothy 5:19,20.

A minister who is telling one lie after another from the pulpit and living in adultery is to be rebuked before all, not praised and commissioned before all. So this entire service was wildly unbiblical if not in open rebellion against scripture. In this atmosphere of disobedience and rebellion against God, numerous false prophecies were spoken. But these “prophecies” seem to have a feel of inspiration of some sort in them. How can this be? And what is the source of this “prophetic inspiration?”

I've Seen This Before

Back in the 1990's, a pastor invited me to attend the services of a visiting “prophet.” Having sat under Sister Goodwin's instruction for years, I had seen the prophet's anointing many times, and was used in it myself. But what I saw in those series of services, I had never seen before. The Holy Spirit was not manifesting in prophecy. There was no unction to prophesy at all. Yet, this man played around on his organ keyboard, and would stop every so often, point to someone in the congregation, and “prophesy” to them. And it was supernatural.

He knew no one in the congregation. This was his first visit to that city. Yet I watched him point out people in the congregation, whom I knew, and tell them details about their lives. Then he would add on some ridiculous prophecy. A good

example I recall to this day involved a woman in the congregation. The praise and worship people were not used or introduced in the services--the "prophet" did all the music himself. So he had no way of knowing that this woman was a member of the praise team. She was just sitting in the row in front of me, like any other congregation member. Suddenly, he pointed to the woman in front of me and spoke along these lines: "You have something to do with music. God has put within you a gift of music. And the Lord wants you to know that this gift is going to increase. You will see the day when you go into the downtown section of this city, stand on a corner, and begin singing the praises of God. And people will come down out of the skyscrapers, fall on their faces, worship God, and acknowledge God is in you of a truth." That was supernatural, but it was nonsense.

To another woman who was overweight and had a bad back, he told her, "Within 30 days you will lose 30 pounds, and your back will be perfectly healed." She rejoiced and believed the prophecy totally. However, in 30 days not only had she not lost 30 pounds, but she was heavier than ever, and her back had worsened to the point where she was walking with a cane.

He prophesied that within six months the size of the Church (about 400) would double. Instead, after six months the membership had dwindled to around 300. And so it went. He spoke out one supposed "prophecy" after another, usually introducing each by speaking out personal details of the person's life that he had no way of knowing, then speaking to them a false prophecy. Whenever I run on to a person that received a prophecy from this man in those series of meetings, I ask them about their prophecy and if it has come to pass. Seventeen years have come and gone since those services, and I don't know of a single prophecy that ever came to pass. In fact, usually the exact opposite came to pass.

Contrast this record please with a testimony concerning the Goodwins. A woman I know, who knew Mom and Dad Goodwin well, called Mom and asked for prayer. She had suffered a long season of blisters breaking out on her hands. She had been to the doctors, but they couldn't figure out what was wrong. They would break open, then become infected, and they were painful. No medications brought any relief. She asked Mom to pray. Mom prayed and then replied along the lines of, "Honey, the Lord shows me that before you go to bed tonight, you are to wrap kleenexes around both of your hands. Then when you awake in the morning, you will be healed and never have this problem again." In obedience and in faith, the woman wrapped kleenexes around her hands before going to bed. When she awoke the next morning, she removed the kleenexes, and her hands were perfectly healed without any scars or other evidence that there had been a problem. I've heard this testimony from this woman's own lips. To this day, she has never had the blisters return.

There were countless similar testimonies concerning the Goodwins. I have talked with numerous people to whom the Goodwins prophesied, and to date I have not found a single person with whom their prophecy did not come to pass. Such was the Goodwins' record throughout nearly 50 years of prophetic ministry. Contrast this

with the prophet I mention of whose prophecies, none that I know of have come to pass in the last 17 years. You see, when the word of the Lord truly comes, it *absolutely comes to pass*.

Mom Goodwin's Explanation to Me

Puzzled by what I was seeing in these services in the 1990's--supernatural revelation preceding prophecies that were false, I called Mom and asked for her explanation. I repeated as best I could word-for-word what the "prophet" had said to various individuals. When I finished repeating the "prophecies" there was just silence on the other end of the line. Finally Mom said, "Honey, you know what I think of prophecies like that." I replied, "Yes, I do, but I would like to hear it from you anyway." She said, "Alright, I'll judge those prophecies. These prophecies are not from God. They are from the Enemy! That man is walking around in the vanity of his own mind. If he points to you and wants to call you out, just stand up and politely say, 'No thank you!' And sit back down. Do not allow that man to prophesy to you. Do not allow that man to lay his hands on you, or you will operate in the same *Spirit of Error* that he operates in." She explained this happening as a manifestation of the Spirit of Error.

Did you know that there is an actual evil spirit identified by name in the Bible as the "Spirit of Error?" It is true. Let's examine the scriptures concerning this Spirit and see how he operates. The Apostle John writes:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. . . . They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (I John 4:1-3, 5, 6).

Sister Goodwin, a seasoned prophet of 50-years standing, told me that the "prophet" in that service years ago operated in "the Spirit of Error." John identifies this particular spirit as the one that speaks through false prophets (verse 1). And "the world hears them." (Verse 5). Lots of people listen to prophets who prophesy through the Spirit of Error.

Now notice that in this scripture the Apostle John gives us a specific direction as to how to identify those who are prophesying under the power of the Spirit of Error: "He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth [the Holy Spirit] and the spirit of error." He is saying that genuine prophets "hear us." Since the original Apostles are no longer with us, the

way we “hear” the Apostles of the Lamb is by heeding and obeying the scriptures that these holy Apostles wrote.

When you see current day “apostles” and “prophets” who refuse to obey scripture by ordaining a man they barely know, and speak out prophecies and “words” far in excess of biblical limitations, how can these possibly be inspired by the Spirit of Truth? When you have “apostles” and “prophets” that hide from the light, run from questions, and urge sin be covered up and the truth not be told, how can such men and women possibly be operating in the Spirit of Truth? When we have “apostles” and “prophets” who refuse to “hear” the clear commands of scripture, the scriptures plainly show us that such men and women are prophesying by the Spirit of Error. Such prophecies are always the exact opposite of God's will and will fail to come to pass--as we have seen these prophecies concerning Todd Bently fail to come to pass.

Sadly though, some Christians love false prophecies and false prophets. They love the superficial, the hype, the false glamor, and the flattery of false prophets and their false prophecies. This is nothing new. The Jews in Isaiah's time loved false prophecy:

. . . this is a rebellious people, lying children,
children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which
say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy
not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things,
prophecy deceits: (Isaiah 30:9,10).

Also in Jeremiah's time, the people of God hated Jeremiah and his true prophecies, and loved instead the false prophets and their pronouncements:

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule
by their means; and my people love to have it so: and
what will ye do in the end thereof? (Jeremiah 5:31)

The Message Version's translation of this verse reads like a press release from Lakeland, Florida:

"Unspeakable! Sickening!
What's happened in this country?
Prophets preach lies
and priests hire on as their assistants.
And my people love it. They eat it up!
But what will you do when it's time to pick up the
pieces?"

What indeed will you do when “it's time to pick up the pieces?” Thus have so many of us asked of the Prophetic and Apostolic Movement leaders for so many years now, only to be laughed at and scorned. Now, no one's laughing.

As I watch the videos of Lakeland, I do not see the Spirit of Truth in operation. I see the Spirit of Error inspiring false prophecies through these individuals. Therefore, I follow the directions given to us by Moses concerning false prophecies:

. . . How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. (Deut.18:21,22).

With the current day “prophets” whose “prophecies” rarely if ever come to pass, I refuse to pay them any attention. Several disillusioned Christians have asked me recently, “I have several books and CD's by the leaders of the Apostolic and Prophetic Move who have now been discredited. What should I do with them?”

My reply is that I have a few such materials from them myself. I keep a few on file to use as resources when I teach on false prophets and their false prophecies. The rest I have found make great doorstops. :)

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