

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Jesus and Healing

Much that passes for evangelicalism today I find personally disheartening. Switch on channel 21 (TBN) and you will find a gaudy mixture of theological nonsense and outright heresy parading around as “Bible-believing Christianity”. The majority of the time these people are preoccupied with getting their viewing audience to send them money—and always under the pretense that giving to their “anointed” ministry is the guaranteed way to get God to return your *investment* a hundredfold.¹ High pressure tactics are used to separate the gullible from their money—and these poor souls are preyed upon by these charlatans who promise them physical healings, financial prosperity, restored marriages, etc. but *only* if they send money. No telling how many poor people respond to these kinds of pitches, meanwhile those pleading for money “to do God’s work” live openly lavish lifestyles.² And of course these is always the claim that it is *always* God’s will that people be healed. The late Oral Roberts, along with Kathryn Kuhlman were pioneers in this quackery, and were followed by the likes of Benny Hinn. Faith healing (and faith healers) has become, over the last fifty years or so, very controversial. Much of the emphasis in the Charismatic movement is on healing. Different perspectives are voiced here. Some say that God *wants* to heal all sickness (but since this doesn’t happen, the fault lies with the person not healed). Some say that God heals through faith healers, who have the gift of healing—but it seems they have very restricted gifts, since they, by their own admission, cannot heal everyone who comes to them. When we go to the Gospels and read about the healing ministry of Jesus and compare this with contemporary healers, we are struck with the enormous differences.

I. THE LORD’S MINISTRY

Jesus began His teaching in the synagogue. In this sense, as in so many others, Jesus was not sectarian, private, or esoteric; He was institutional, public, and normal.³ Note the place given to the verbs: teaching and preaching.

- A. Teaching - from the Greek word DIDASKALOS, Jesus is addressed as “Teacher” on a number of occasions (cf. Matthew 8:19, 12:38). A teacher had to be someone with disciples (like John the Baptist). Jesus was recognized as a teacher even by those who opposed Him (cf. Matthew 22:16, 24, 36). The external form of Jesus’ teaching followed the forms of explaining and expounding the O.T. Scriptures (cf. Luke 4:21 ff.). The difference, however, between Jesus and the Rabbis in respect to the subject of teaching is to be found, not in the matter itself, but in His own person, i.e., in the fact of His self-awareness as the Son. “This is why His teaching, whether in the form of exposition or otherwise, causes astonishment among His hearers (Matthew 7:28, 13:53).⁴
- B. Preaching – from the Greek word KERUSSON, transliterated in English as *kerygma*, indicates an authoritative proclamation. “There is a formal difference between the words *teaching* and *preaching* here: preaching refers more to the announcement of something, and teaching to a more detailed and broader instruction in what was announced.”⁵
- C. The Content - The “good news” (EUANGELION, lit. gospel) of the “Kingdom.” The term recurs in 9:35 and 24:14, and becomes *this gospel* in 26:13. “Of the Kingdom” is what is called an objective genitive in Greek. It is the “good news concerning the Kingdom.” “The *good news* concerns God and the inbreaking of His saving reign in the person of His Son the Messiah.”⁶

II. THE CONFIRMATION OF HIS MINISTRY

The third and final verb is “healing” (THERAPEUON, from where our word *therapy* comes. Note the difference between the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus. John preached and taught and baptized—but there is no record that he healed. Note the following points:

- A. Jesus Healed Without Exception. His healing was all-encompassing, “all types” of disease, and every kind of sickness. This included the crippled and the blind.
- B. Jesus Dealt With the Demon-Possessed.⁷ both Scripture and Jewish tradition take sickness as resulting directly or indirectly from living in a fallen world. The Messianic Age would end such grief (Isaiah 11:1 - 5, 35:5 - 6).⁸
- C. Jesus’ Miracles Confirmed His Message. He claimed the authority to forgive sin and therefore to heal the sick (cf. Matthew 9:3 - 6). His miracles announced that in Him the Kingdom had arrived.

III. THE RESULTS OF HIS MINISTRY

“. . . His fame spread.” Large crowds followed Jesus. Much sickness and misery was removed. Multitudes were brought under the teaching of Christ, and many were made disciples.

CONCLUSION: The miracles of Jesus were confirmations of His teaching. His healings, dealing with every kind of ailment, not only heralded the Kingdom (the subject of Jesus’ preaching and teaching), but demonstrated that in the person of Jesus Christ, God has pledged to deal with sin at a basic level (cf. 1:21, 8:17).

ENDNOTES

¹ In a book titled *God’s Will Is Prosperity*, Gloria Copeland (who, along with her husband Kenneth, appears frequently on TBN) explains the “hundredfold” this way. Expanding on the promise of Jesus to provide a “hundredfold” return to those who leave everything behind for the kingdom, Gloria writes, “Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000. I know that you can multiply, but I want you to see in black and white how tremendous the hundredfold return is.” And just so you don’t miss her point, Gloria explains further: “Give one house and receive one hundred houses or one house worth one hundred times as much. Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. Give one car and the return would furnish you a lifetime of cars. In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.” For further documentation cf. Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity In Crisis* (Harvest House, 1993), p. 199.

² The 1998 report of the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* revealed the following: The largest increase among all chief executives went to Paul Crouch, president of Trinity Christian Center in Santa Ana, Calif., which operates the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Crouch’s total compensation package rose from \$159,000 in 1997 to \$262,915 in 1998, a 64.8 percent increase. But Crouch’s wife, Janice, the organization’s vice president, received an even bigger boost. Her compensation rose to \$321,375 from \$159,500, making her the highest paid executive in the *Chronicle’s* sample of religious non-profits. These figures do not include the various perks (cars, house, vacations, etc.) the Crouches receive at the ministry’s expense. This kind of shenanigans also includes the likes of Robert Schuller. The LA Times recently reported that” Financial documents filed Wednesday in the Crystal Cathedral bankruptcy case show generous compensation paid to insiders and family members of founding minister Robert H. Schuller in the year before the Garden Grove-based mega-church filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. During the same period, revenue plummeted, and church employees and vendors—from choral members to the livestock company that provided animals for its elaborate productions—were laid off or went without pay. The church paid out more than \$1.8 million to 23 insiders and members of Schuller’s family in the 12 months leading up to the Oct. 18 bankruptcy filing, according to the financial statements. That sum included \$832,490 in tax-exempt housing allowances given to eight people and payments to all five of Schuller’s children and their spouses. The newly filed documents show that in addition to Southard, at least three others received housing allowances of more than \$100,000: Schuller’s son-in-law Paul Dunn, who writes and directs the annual Glory of Christmas and Easter pageants; Schuller’s daughter Carol Milner and his son Robert A. Schuller, who left the church in 2008. Founder Robert H. Schuller also received an allowance, as did Coleman, who is Schuller’s son-in-law; James Penner, another son-in-law who produces the “Hour of Power” television program; and Southard’s son-in-law William Gaultiere, a part-time pastor. Over the years, some critics have contended that the church gave money to family members, who in some cases performed seemingly little work. Those claims have never been verified because as a religious nonprofit, the church is not required to file tax statements or make its finances public. Dunn, the pageant director, who lives in Hawaii, received more than \$300,000 in housing allowance and vendor payments in the last year and was still owed \$64,758, according to the financial statement filed Wednesday. The latest records show that all five of Schuller’s children and their spouses collected payouts from the church as either employees or vendors. The payments, which total about \$1.2 million, helped support expensive homes. Milner and her husband, Timothy, own houses in Orange and Boulder, Colo., both valued at more than \$1 million. The Dunns own at least two properties in Hawaii; and the Laguna Beach home of Robert A. Schuller is valued at more than \$1 million as well, according to property records. <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-crystal-cathedral-20101203,0,5936355.print.story>

³ F. D. Bruner, *The Christbook: A Historical/Theological Commentary – Matthew 1 – 12* (Word, 1987), p. 129.

⁴ K. H. Rengstorf, “DIDASKO,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, II (Eerdmans, 1964), p. 140.

⁵ H. N. Ridderbos, *The Bible Student’s Commentary: Matthew* (Zondervan, 1987), pp. 78, 79.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *Matthew: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin, VIII (Zondervan, 1984), p. 121.

⁷ We should note that demon possession is mentioned first here and is included in a list of diseases that afflict the body. The Evangelist’s reason for this undoubtedly was that demon possession was the cause of many physical disorders (see, e.g., 9:32, 12:22; Mark 9:25; Luke 13:11, 16. H. N. Ridderbos, op. cit., p. 80.

⁸ Carson, op. cit., p. 121.