

A Theological Response to Criticism of the Lakeland Outpouring and Todd Bentley
BIBLICAL REASONS TO RECEIVE GOD’S GLORY AND GIVE IT
AWAY IN POWER EVANGELISM

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An unmistakable outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Over the past month and a half, there has been an unmistakable outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Lakeland, Florida, led by Canadian healing evangelist Todd Bentley, Stephen Strader, pastor of Ignited Church, Lakeland, Florida, David Tomberlin, and other colleagues of these leaders. Thousands of Christian leaders from almost 40 countries have visited the Lakeland meetings, and millions around the world in 214 nations have watched on live television through God TV and the internet, as multiple lame people have gotten out of their wheelchairs and walked, as blind eyes have received sight, as deaf ears have opened, and as of this writing, up to 20 accounts have been reported of clinically dead people being raised to life through the prayers of people who have visited the Lakeland meetings. The Lakeland meetings not only bear similarities to the Argentine revival of the 1980s-1990s and the Toronto and Brownsville awakenings of the 1990s (each of which I personally witnessed or experienced), the level of God's power being poured out in the meetings is extraordinary, to say the least. It is clear from the daily broadcasts of the Lakeland meetings that scores of people are putting their faith in Christ and many are being healed from all kinds of diseases and conditions.

Todd Bentley, 32, a tattooed, body-pierced, T-shirt-wearing evangelist from British Columbia, is not really "your grandmother's evangelist", as Charisma editor Lee Grady puts it. "I grew up a drug addict," Bentley explains. "I got saved at 18 in my drug dealer's trailer because I had an experience with God." His purpose, he says, is to preach intimacy with God. "Christianity has become a religious, organized structure. But people are realizing that the power of God is real, and that the Kingdom of God isn't just a bunch of people sitting around talking [see **1 Cor. 4:20**]."

Todd Bentley is no fly-by-night Bible teacher, "with an untutored grasp of Christian theology," as one theology professor erroneously claimed.¹ I beg to differ. I have personally followed Todd's teachings (on CD's and on the internet), his books, and his ministry for the last eight years, and I have never found a biblically and theologically untrained evangelist or ministry leader over the past twenty years who accurately interprets and rightly handles the Scriptures as well as Todd Bentley has done in his teachings and writings. For example Todd's book, *The Reality of the Supernatural World: Exploring Heavenly Realms and Prophetic Experiences*,² is not only straightforward in its treatment of the relevant biblical evidence but is also careful and judicious, and the same cannot be said of many charismatic authors' treatment of Scripture in the huge amount of books being published in the Prayer and Renewal movement today.

Criticism generating a lot of heat but little light

Unfortunately in North America, when the Holy Spirit moves through a new leader to spread the gospel and further God's Kingdom, there has arisen the normal rash of so-called Bible "experts," heresy hunters, and even godly leaders in the Body of Christ who feel the need to criticize or "correct" what they do not understand

¹ Such an accusation betrays this professor's own unwillingness to examine *carefully* Todd Bentley's teachings and to re-examine *carefully* the relevant biblical passages and their interpretation by historic biblical scholarship and by theologians throughout the history of the Church: his attitude hardly represents objective theological scholarship.

² Todd Bentley, *The Reality of the Supernatural World: Exploring Heavenly Realms and Prophetic Experiences*, Ladysmith, BC, Canada: Sound of Fire Productions, 2005.

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about the way God is moving or what they show themselves to be unaware of in Scripture, as it relates to what the Scriptures show about power evangelism, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual inheritance and Kingdom mission of every believer today, that has been taught by Todd Bentley over the years and is now being taught about and ministered at the Lakeland meetings.

Following are the chief objections and criticisms on the Internet and circulating in e-mail newsletters and in print that I am aware of that need to be answered in the light of Scripture:

Objection 1: "The healings aren't really real" and "People are only working themselves into altered states of consciousness."

One can hardly believe the credulity and the tacit denial of reality in such claims. It is hardly objective to claim about the Lakeland meetings, as the reporter of the Tampa Tribune did in a recent article, that "whether healing in a medical sense is delivered here may be hard to measure." This kind of thinking is echoed by self-proclaimed Bible "experts," theologians, and critics, who really do not know the Scriptures well, who are unfamiliar with biblical languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic), who are unfamiliar with the value of much of historic biblical scholarship, who seem to know nothing of the healing power of the resurrected Jesus Christ operating in the world today, and who seem to be completely ignorant of what the Bible shows about power evangelism, healing, and revival. Such people claim about Lakeland the same things they claimed about the past outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Argentina, Toronto, and Brownsville that "desperate people are looking for quick fixes" but are only getting "false hope." These so-called "experts" claim that "participants leave [the meetings] believing they are truly healed, but back in the real world they find nothing has changed."

Again one is amazed that such presumptuous statements are made publicly without any supporting evidence whatsoever from Scripture or from any other authoritative source to prove their claims. *Come on, dear readers: this is not that complicated!* Such statements so obviously deny the empirical facts readily visible to the naked eye watching the Lakeland meetings. One has just to watch the nightly meetings: people who have so obviously been confined to wheel chairs are getting out of them and *walking and running!* Some of those formerly bound to wheelchairs were *obviously* unwieldy in taking their first steps, clearly confirming the fact that they have been unable to walk for years. One could watch on the Internet and on God TV as people with blind eyes start laughing as they can now see out of their formerly blind eyes, and people with deaf ears say they can now hear out of their formerly deaf ears. Multiple children with crossed-eyes, whose parents and relatives testified on live TV that they had been born with the condition, were visibly healed with perfectly normal eyes. And the list of clearly evident healings goes on and on.

To suggest, as some of the critics do, that all these people experiencing dramatic healings, who are testifying and visibly demonstrating that they have been healed and can do things with the healed parts of their bodies that they were formerly unable to do—to suggest they are liars or are somehow "making it up" is not at all credible, and it borders on the kind of insane thinking of world leaders like Mahmoud Ahmadinajad, President of Iran, who actually tried to convince students and faculty at Columbia University on September 24, 2007, that the Holocaust murder of millions of Jews never happened in World War II. It was self-evident to all observers then that it was not very wise to try to convince highly intelligent, thinking people, who make it their business to do careful historical research, that the Nazi Holocaust never happened. And it hardly represented clear-headed, objective thinking on

Ahmadinajad's part. But this is how many critics are approaching the evidence seen online and on TV in the daily Lakeland meetings. After all, how does one "make up" getting out of a wheelchair and walking after being bound to that wheelchair for 10 years, with one's family members testifying, as happens frequently at Lakeland, to one's previous inability to even stand up, let alone walk around? How do you "make up" people coming back from being clinically dead (!), especially *after the onset of rigor mortis stiffening the muscles and limbs*, that typically manifests within one-to-three hours of clinical death³? How does one make up impossible miracles like these? One recent case of an older woman being resurrected after rigor-mortis had set in has been called a medical "miracle" by doctors and has been reported by the Associated Press,⁴ ABC News,⁵ and Fox News⁶ for the whole world to see.

Is the devil behind the healings and resurrections?

It is also clear that the devil and demons are not the source of these healings, no matter how much critics claim the opposite. Yes, in the last days, which we are in, Scripture says that there will be false prophets and messiahs exercising counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, as is made clear by **Matt. 24:24**, **2 Thes. 2:7-13**, and **Rev. 13:11-17**. But the one big difference is the *fruit* (**Matt. 7:15-23** and see below at the end of this paper on biblical guidelines for discerning good and bad fruit). The fruit of these false prophets' and messiahs' words and deeds of power will *not* consist of people loving Jesus and wanting to serve God with all their hearts. Instead, false prophets and messiahs will cause people to "delight in wickedness" (**2 Thes. 2:12**) and to serve themselves, man, Mammon, money, and ultimately the Beast (**Rev. 13:15-16**; see **2 Tim 3:1-5** "[in the last days] People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient"). And last time I checked the relevant Scripture passages, it was manifestly self-evident that the devil would hardly make lame people walk, blind people see, deaf people hear, and dead people come back to life, so that they love and praise Jesus and want to serve God like never before, as has manifestly been the case with those who have been healed and resurrected from the dead through the Lakeland outpouring.

Jesus' healing ministry included both healing and casting out demons, as summary descriptive statements from the Synoptic Gospels like **Matt. 4:23**, parallel to **Mark 1:39**, clearly show. And Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of deriving his power from the devil and demonic forces, to which He responded that the devil wasn't in the business of casting out his demons and healing people in a way that glorifies God and His Kingdom—only the Holy Spirit heals people to glorify Jesus and to manifest God's Kingdom:

Matt. 12:27-28⁷ -- **12:27** And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. **12:28** But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then *the kingdom of God has already overtaken you*.

³ J. Dix and M. A. Graham, *Time of Death, Decomposition, and Identification: An Atlas* (New York: CRC Press, 2000), p. 2.

⁴ <http://cosmos.bcst.yahoo.com/up/player/popup/index.php?cl=7932226>

⁵ <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=4923465>

⁶ <http://cosmos.bcst.yahoo.com/up/player/popup/index.php?cl=7932226>

⁷ Except where otherwise marked, Scripture is quoted by permission from the amazing online, scholarly, and largely trustworthy NET Bible® translation (<http://net.Bible.org/bible.php>) copyright ©1996-2007 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.bible.org All rights reserved. The NET Bible is a *fantastic* online resource for scholars, students, and pastors alike!

Some of today's critics also claim that true biblical revival is confined *only* to "believers having meaningful prayer, sharing the gospel with others and learning the Bible." But such statements are biblically incomplete and are therefore to be rejected. And those who make these statements offer no biblical references whatsoever to support these claims. Where in heaven's name is the Bible passage that proves that true biblical revival *only* involves believers having "meaningful prayer" (whatever that means: what is "unmeaningful prayer?"), "sharing the gospel," and "learning the Bible"? Clearly biblical revival can involve these activities but it is not *limited* to them—it is much, much more!

Normative New Testament evangelism is accompanied by God's power

A simple perusal of the following passages shows that true biblical revival *always* involved word and deed, the preaching of the gospel alongside people ministering and experiencing (not just talking about) God's healing and miraculous power: **Matt.** 4:23; 9:35-36; 10:1, 7-8; 11:5; 12:15, 18; 15:30; 19:2 (cf. Mk. 10:1); 21:14 (cf. Lk. 21:37); **Mk.** 1: 38-39; 2:2, 11; 3:14-15; 6:12-13; 10:1 (cf. Mat. 19:2); **Lk.** 4:18; 5:17, 24; 6:6-11, 17-18; 7:22; 9:1-2; 10:9, 13; 13:10-13, 22, 32; 14:4, 7ff.; 21:37 (cf. Mat. 21:14); 16:15-18, 20; **Jn.** 3:2; 7:14-15, 21-23, 31, 38; 10:25, 32, 38; 12:37, 49; 14:10, 12; **Acts** 1:1; 2:22; 3:6, 12; 4:29-30; 5:12-16, 20-21, 28, 42; 6:8, 10; 8:4-7, 12; 9:17-18 (cf. 22:13), 34-35; 10:38; 14:3, 8-10, 15ff.; 15:12, 36; 18:5, 11 (cf. II Cor. 12:12; I Cor. 2:4-5); 19:8-12; **Rom.** 15:18-19; **I Cor.** 2:4-5; 11:1; 12:1-11, 28-31; 14:22-25; **II Cor.** 12:12; **Gal.** 3:5; **Phil.** 4:9; **I Thes.** 1:5-6; **Heb.** 2:3-4; 6:1-2; **Jas.** 5:13-16.

Indeed Paul said in **Romans 15:18-19** that only the proclamation of the gospel that is accompanied by healing, signs and wonders, that display the power of the risen Lord, represents a full proclamation of the gospel:

Rom. 15:18-19 (NIV)— I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have **fully proclaimed** the gospel of Christ. [italics and boldface mine]

In this passage Paul characterizes his twofold ministry ("*word and deed*") by saying, "I have *fully proclaimed*" (Greek *pleroo* "fill, complete, fulfill"⁸) the gospel of Christ" (**Rom. 15:19b**). Paul's account seems to make it clear that a "full" gospel

⁸BDAG (W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, W. F. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000]), pp. 827-829; The use of Greek *pleroo* "bring (the gospel) to full expression" in Rom. 15:19 cannot mean that Paul *finished* preaching the gospel, because he was still planning to visit Rome and preach the gospel further in Spain (Rom. 1:13, 15; 15:23f.). Nor can it mean that he *said everything* there was to say about the gospel (J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968], p. 214). But, as New Testament scholar Prof. Gerhard Friedrich points out, it means that Paul proclaimed the gospel in the way he described in 15:18-19, "in word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit": "*Again, Rom. 15:19 . . . does not mean that Paul has concluded his missionary work, but that the gospel is fulfilled when it has taken full effect. In the preaching of Paul Christ has shown Himself effective in word and sign and miracle (v. 18). Hence the gospel has been brought to fulfillment from Jerusalem to Illyricum and Christ is named in the communities (v. 20)*" (Friedrich, in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-74], vol. 2, p. 732).

proclamation consists both of preaching or teaching the word and of attendant works of power--signs and wonders--through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mainstream New Testament scholars have known this for a very long time. And most of the critics and Bible "experts" criticizing the Lakeland outpouring and Todd Bentley would have a very hard time demonstrating that they know the text of the New Testament better than these scholars. For example, German New Testament scholar, Prof. Otfried Hofius, summarizes the New Testament evidence concerning the integral relationship of healing, signs and wonders, and spiritual gifts to the proclamation of the gospel:

According to the witness of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus sent out his disciples to preach and to perform miracles (**Mat. 10:7f.; Mk. 3:14f.; Lk. 9:1f.; 10:9; cf. Mk. 6:7ff.; Lk. 9:6**)

Similarly, Acts mentions many times the correlation of apostolic proclamation and apostolic miracle-working (**2:2f.; 4:29f.; cf. 3:1ff.; 4:16, 22; 5:12; 6:8; 8:5ff.; 9:32ff.; 15:12; 20:7ff.**). The miracles are co-ordinated with the preaching--they are "accompanying signs," by which Christ confirms the word of the witnesses (**Acts 14:3; cf. Mk. 16:20**). As in the authoritative word (**Acts 6:10**) so in the signs is manifested the power of the Holy Spirit promised to the disciples (**Acts 1:8**). . . .

For Paul, too, "word and deed," preaching and signs belong together; in both Christ is at work in the power of the Spirit (**Rom. 15:18f.**). Signs and wonders accompany the proclamation which takes place "in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (**1 Cor. 2:4; cf. 1 Thes. 1:5**). . . . To the hearers of the preaching also the Holy Spirit mediates miraculous powers (**Gal. 3:5**). That is why alongside the gifts of proclamation the charisma of healing and the power to perform miracles belong to the living gifts of the Spirit in the church (**1 Cor. 12:18ff., 28; cf. Jas. 5:14f.**).

Finally Hebrews also bears witness that God confirms the preaching of salvation, which proclaims the dawn of the age of salvation, by signs and wonders (**2:3ff.**), which, as "powers of the world to come" (**6:5**), foreshadow the completion of salvation. . . .

Preaching and miracles thus belong essentially together according to the New Testament. In both Jesus Christ proves himself to be the living Lord, present in his church in the Holy Spirit.⁹

Normative New Testament evangelism, then, includes healing ministry and ministry with all spiritual gifts, as a careful examination of the passages cited above prove. But this conclusion does not suggest, on the other hand, that any form of evangelism not accompanied by miracles is not true evangelism or that such evangelism is substandard, as some critics say that advocates of power evangelism are claiming. The fact that Paul preached the gospel without any signs and wonders at the Areopagus in Athens (**Acts 17:16-34**) is enough to show that evangelism is not substandard when no signs or wonders are performed, though it is not normative New Testament evangelism. The obviously anointed ministry of such a great evangelist as Billy Graham is enough to show that evangelism unaccompanied by miraculous healing is not substandard. But even Graham affirms the use in the

⁹O. Hofius, in C. Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 632-633.

Church today of all spiritual gifts, including the miraculous gifts--healing, tongues, miraculous powers, etc.--because, according to him, they are biblical.¹⁰

Embracing Jesus' way of doing evangelism

And though evangelism unaccompanied by healing and miraculous gifts is not substandard, it does seem biblically abnormal for critics and Bible "experts" to reject and refuse to embrace the way Jesus, the apostles, and the Early Church *normally* evangelized with preaching accompanied by miraculous gifts and healing signs and wonders. And no, it will not do to claim the old, tired-out, stale, unbiblical claim that healing and miracles stopped after the New Testament apostolic age. It has been proven over and over again from internal textual evidence in the New Testament and from empirical evidence throughout Church history that healing and miracles were *normal* in the post-biblical Early Church and continued throughout the entire stretch of Church history till today.¹¹

The fact is that Todd Bentley and his colleagues are only doing what Jesus commanded! Jesus not only commanded His disciples to heal the sick when He sent them out to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God (**Matt. 10:1f., 5-8; Mk. 6:7, 12-13; Lk. 9:1-2; 10:1, 9**), but Jesus also commanded His disciples to train *all* disciples in the Early Church to depend on God's Spirit and both to preach the gospel and heal the sick. Just as Jesus trained His disciples to reproduce His message and His Kingdom ministry, they, in turn, were to train the Church to do the same (In **1 Cor. 11:1** Paul says "*Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ*"; **Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 1:6**):

Matt. 28:18-20— 28:18 Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **28:19** Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **28:20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." [italics and boldface mine]

John 14:12-13—14:12 I tell you the solemn truth, *the person who believes in me will perform the miraculous¹² deeds that I am doing*, and will perform greater deeds than these, because I am going to the Father.

The apostles not only proclaimed the gospel with preaching and healing, but they also taught the disciples they made to proclaim the gospel with preaching and healing--non-apostles like Stephen (**Acts 6:8, 10**), Philip (**Acts 8:4-7, 12**); Ananias

¹⁰Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life* (Waco: Word, 1978), chapter 13.

¹¹G. S. Greig and K. N. Springer, eds., *The Kingdom and the Power*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993; J. Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles*, Sheffield Academic, 1993; Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1993; S. M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989.

¹²New Testament scholars widely recognize that the Greek term, *erga* "works," when referring to Jesus and God the Father in the Gospel of John, denote miraculous works and are closely related to the *semeia*, "signs," of Jesus. So, for example, the healing of the man born blind in John 9 is referred to as "*the works of God (ta erga tou Theou)*" in John 9:3 and as one of "*such signs (toiauta semeia)*" in John 9:16 ("The deeds of God and Jesus, specifically miracles" BDAG, p. 390; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord* [London: Macmillan, 1856], p. 6; K. H. Rengstorff, "*semeion*," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, pp. 247-248).

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(**Acts 9: 17-18; 22:12-16**); congregations like the Corinthians (**1 Cor. 11:1; 12:9**); the Galatians (**Gal. 3:5**)¹³; the Philippians (**Phil. 4:9**); the Thessalonians (**1 Thes. 1:5-6**); and Jewish Christian congregations (**Heb. 6:1-2**¹⁴; **James 5:14-16**). **Hebrews 6:1-2** says that the "elementary teachings" of the Early Church included teaching and training on the laying on of hands, which was one of the standard means of healing the sick in the Gospels and Acts.¹⁵ This clearly shows that training believers how to heal the sick through the laying on of hands was a part of the elementary teachings of the Early Church, further demonstrating that every disciple in the Early Church was trained to heal the sick and do the miraculous works of Jesus.

We are to follow the example of apostolic leaders who have gone before us throughout Church history, even as they followed Jesus' example (**1 Cor. 11:1**). It was, after all, Jesus who said, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (**Luke 6:40**; cf. **Mat. 10:25**). Jesus' words are still a mandate for us today. Todd Bentley and his ministry deserve applause, not criticism, for being committed to Jesus' mandate to equip all disciples to spread the gospel with power! The real question is: Is the Body of Christ going to commit herself, or not, to obeying Jesus' commands to preach and heal? He is giving us a powerful example and offering a powerful anointing in the Lakeland outpouring, as He has done in past outpourings and revivals. We dare not ignore the message Jesus is sending us. Jesus said in **Matt. 24:14** "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*" We need to follow Todd Bentley's example and get passionately and single-heartedly focused on Jesus, stir up a desperate hunger for His glory, and give ourselves to obeying His commands in Scripture to preach the gospel and heal the sick in all nations, as the Day of the Lord and the end of the Age is drawing near!

Objection 2: "Many healings are partial or gradual, and some people lose their healing after they claim to have been healed." "Healings in the New Testament always happened immediately and could not be 'lost'."

These claims by the critics are simply not true. A careful study of healings in the New Testament leads to different conclusions. New Testament healings could in some cases happen gradually and could in fact be lost after one received healing. That is why we need to encourage people today, who have received partial healing, to keep praying and pressing in to the Lord's presence, till their healing is complete. And that is why everyone who has received a healing from the Lord needs to be warned not to allow the enemy to steal it from them through letting themselves lapse into unbelief or other sins, after they have been healed.

¹³The Greek word *dunameis* "miracles" mentioned in **Gal. 3:5** primarily refers to miraculous healing and deliverance from demons throughout the New Testament: compare **Acts 2:22** and **10:38** (where *dunameis* "miracles" in **2:22** is described in **10:38** as "healing" denoted by the Greek verb *iaomai* "to heal"), and see passages cited in *BDAG*, p. 263, column a, no. 3; compare also H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 8; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 252ff.; W. Grundmann, "*dunamai/dunamis*," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, pp. 301-302.

¹⁴Besides imparting the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, the "laying on of hands," mentioned in the list of elementary teachings, is one of the principle means of prayer for healing in the New Testament (**Matt. 9:29; Mk. 1:41; 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 16:18; Lk. 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:17; 28:8; Jas. 5:14** "let them pray over [*epi*] him"; E. Lohse, "*kheir*," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol 9, pp. 431-432). It follows that prayer for healing and prayer to convey the power and gifts of the Spirit was included in the "elementary teachings" of the Early Church.

¹⁵ See previous note.

Some of Jesus' healings and deliverances happened gradually. In **Mark 5:8**, Jesus had to command demons more than once before they left a demonized man: "Jesus **had been saying** (Greek imperfect verb *elegen*)¹⁶ to him, 'Come out of this man, you evil spirit!'" And the demons did not leave the man until Jesus interrogated them further (**Mark 5:9-13**). Another explicit example of gradual healing in the New Testament is the occasion when Jesus healed a blind man at Bethsaida (**Mark 8:22-26**). When Jesus first laid hands on him, the man's sight was only partially healed:¹⁷

Mark 8:23-24-- 8:23 He took the blind man by the hand and brought him outside of the village. Then he spit on his eyes, placed his hands on his eyes and asked, "Do you see anything?" **8:24** Regaining his sight he said, "I see people, but they look like trees walking."

Jesus had to lay hands on him once more before the man's sight was fully restored:

Mark 8:25-- 8:25 Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again. And he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Now, again, *this is not complicated, dear readers*. If the Son of God ministered healing in stages or gradually, as in these two cases, should we ordinary believers be surprised if we see partial healing or gradual healings, as we pray for and minister healing today? I don't think so.

Don't let the enemy steal your healing! Close the door to all sin

Jesus also made it clear that a person could lose their healing through lapsing into sin. In **John 5:14** Jesus expressly warned the man whom he had healed of lameness in **5:8-9** that a condition worse than the original lameness could come back upon him if he persisted in sin:

John 5:14-- After this Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "Look, you have become well (*hugies* "healed, sound"¹⁸). Don't sin any more, lest something worse (*kheiron . . . ti*) happen to you."

I'm aware that many believe that "something worse" (Greek *kheiron . . . ti*) in this passage refers only to eternal punishment, which is what sin ultimately leads to, according to the broader context of the Gospel of John (**Jn. 3:18; 5:24; 8:21, 24**).¹⁹ But the phrase primarily refers to something worse than *the lame condition* that the man was just healed from. Some simple discourse analytical observations from the passage demonstrate this. The immediate co-text (the text before and after **John**

¹⁶ Pointed out by well-known Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, *Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958) sub **Mark 5:8**; Max Zerwick also translates the imperfect verb *elegen* with its basic past continuous meaning "(for) he had been saying," in *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 3rd edition (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988), p. 116; Id., *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), §290.

¹⁷ See Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, p. 419-421 who also cites Calvin's remarks, *Commentary on the Four Gospels*, re. **Mark 8:23**, that the grace of Christ flowed to this man as it were "drop by drop"; S. Eitrem, *Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament* (Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. Supplet., 12, Osloae, 1950), p. 45: "Apparently this cure is a difficult one, being completed in two stages"; cited by van der Loos, p. 419, n. 5.

¹⁸ BDAG, p. 1023.

¹⁹ G. Bertram, "hamartano," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 307, n. 151.

5:14)²⁰ suggests that "something worse" refers to a condition worse than that of which Jesus healed the man.²¹ The co-textual referent of Greek *kheiron . . . ti* ("something worse")--the previous element in the textual account of the lame man's healing to which the comparative "something worse" refers--is the man's previous condition of lameness (**Jn. 5:3-6**), which is in contrast to his subsequent state of being physically healed (**Jn. 5:14**, *hugies*, "healthy, sound, healed"²²). What the comparative adjective *kheiron* "worse" refers to in each of the New Testament passages in which it occurs depends entirely on its co-text in each passage,²³ and it does refer to worse conditions of physical illness in three other passages: **Mark 5:26** (a worse condition of hemorrhaging); **Matt. 12:45** and **Luke 11:26** (a worse condition of demonization).

So it is clear then that this text describes Jesus warning the man healed at the Pool of Bethesda that his lame condition or something worse would return to him, if he keeps sinning. And this shows generally that just as a worse state of demonization may return through a person lapsing into sin, after a demon has been cast out of that person (**Matt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26**), so also, after one has been healed of an illness, a worse condition of illness or suffering than that which has been healed may return, if the person lapses into, or persists in sin, unbelief, or any kind of unrepentance. Like the man healed at the pool of Bethesda, our ongoing wholeness depends in part on our own resolve to turn away from sin and unbelief, and on our willingness to keep trusting and obeying Jesus.

When my wife Catherine and I pray over people and the Lord heals them, we warn them to expect the enemy to try to send the symptoms of the condition back upon them, and to simply resist such an attack by telling the symptoms to leave in Jesus' name. We instruct them to tell the enemy that they will not let him steal their healing. Many, many have reported to us that their old symptoms tried to return within twenty four hours of their healing, and that a simple command in Jesus' name made the newly returned symptoms disappear forever. We also warn them, as Jesus did the man healed of lameness, not to lapse into sin or unbelief, which might also open the door to sickness returning after Jesus has healed them. Over the years, this simple instruction has saved folks a lot of unnecessary grief and suffering, after Jesus has healed them.

²⁰ The term "co-text" refers in linguistics and discourse analysis to text surrounding the particular word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or pericope, under discussion. The term "context" refers to the text and additional information about the nature of the text and its historical and cultural setting: the historical period in which it was written, its literary genre (fiction/non-fiction), the audience, the age and nationality of the writer, etc.

²¹See Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, p. 458f., who says: "One can surmise . . . a relationship between the man's sins and his disease. Something worse might happen to him. This might be taken to mean a 'worse' disease, or some form or the other of chastisement, indeed eternal punishment. . . . It would be a calamity which would form a sharp contrast to the salvation which the man had just been permitted to receive in his healing." Several other New Testament scholars also identify "something worse" with the immediate condition of illness from which the man was healed: Bertram, "*hamartano*," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 288, n. 58; Oepke, "*iaomai*," in *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 204; *id.*, "*nosos*," in *ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 1095.

²²*BDAG*, p. 1023.

²³Greek *kheiron* "worse" refers to the following conditions in the New Testament: **Matt. 9:16** (a worse tear in a garment); **Matt. 12:45** (a worse condition of demonization); **Matt. 27:64** (a worse deception); **Mk. 2:21** (a worse tear in a garment); **Mk. 5:26** (a worse condition of hemorrhaging); **Lk. 11:26** (a worse case of demonization); **1 Tim. 5:8** (a person worse than an unbeliever); **2 Tim. 3:13** (worse evil men and imposters); **Heb. 10:29** (worse punishment); **2 Pet. 2:20** (a worse condition of corruption).

Objection 3: "The manifestations, shaking, vibrating, laughing, talk of electricity, and weird behavior didn't happen in the Bible and cannot be from God. Todd Bentley has an obsession with the paranormal."

While I agree—and I have heard Todd Bentley and other leaders of the Lakeland revival agree—that our focus should not be on the miracles and the manifestations, but on Jesus alone, it is simply not true that Todd Bentley has "an obsession with the paranormal" or that the "weird" manifestations are not from God and are automatically to be branded "New Age," "witchcraft," or the other inaccurate and imaginative terms used by the critics. Todd Bentley has been criticized for saying "Bam" or "loosing fireballs" or slapping people or kneeling people, when the Lord leads him to call the power of the Holy Spirit onto people he is praying over, and for displaying other unusual manifestations like shaking and "vibrating," when he is under the power of God's presence.

Why don't we take the same criticisms to Scripture and test them there: Did Jesus "loose" the power of the Holy Spirit in weird ways? Try rubbing mud spittle on eyeballs (**John 9:6**), putting fingers in deaf ears (**Mark 7:33**), spitting on tongues or spitting on eyes (**Mark 7:33; 8:23**), and breathing or blowing on faces (**John 20:22**). Maybe the critics would prefer mud spittle on their eyeballs to a "bam", but personally, I would prefer a "bam" to having to wash some mud spittle off my eyeballs. Of course, on second thought, if Jesus wanted to put mud spittle on my eyeballs, I would ask Him for as much as I could get to cover my whole head and body with, because I know that whatever He offers is good for me!

Forget the weirdness and look at the fruit

So, is weirdness a legitimate category to determine whether a manifestation is really from God or not? Scripture actually shows that weirdness is not a criterion at all, but only the *fruit* of a manifestation. (See below at the end of this paper on biblical guidelines for discerning good and bad fruit.) What focus do the manifestations produce in people—a focus on the manifestation itself, a focus on the leader himself or herself, or a focus on Jesus?

When one asks the "weirdness" question, one has only to do a careful study in the Old and New Testaments of how human flesh reacts to the power of God's presence and glory to see that plenty of unusual manifestations resulted from people encountering God's power. And none of these manifestations in Scripture took the focus of God's people off of loving, serving, and obeying God, as is the case, I believe, at Lakeland. Scripture clearly associates certain manifestations and phenomena with the presence of God in power. Scripture may not describe every detail we may wish to know, but it does show some basic facts about the issue.

Scripture promises that the Holy Spirit would teach believers all things (**John 14:26; John 16:13-15; I John 2:27**), obviously including details which Scripture does not set forth systematically but which are nonetheless attested to and implied by clear scriptural evidence. So we need to consciously ask the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and help us discern error and bind the enemy from interfering with our thinking (**James 4:7-8**; compare Peter's thoughts being influenced by the enemy in **Matt. 16:22-23**), when we study the Word of God and when we try to evaluate what is happening in meetings like those at Lakeland. And our educational institutions—seminaries, Christian colleges and universities, and Bible schools—**must** develop a new academic standard of Spirit-led study, a new epistemological standard of gaining knowledge, that teaches and practices the biblical principle of consciously asking the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, and letting the Spirit lead in **all** things. This was

the mode of operation in the Jerusalem council of **Acts 15** ("it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," **Acts 15:28**), and it must be our mode of operation today. It is clear from their divisive, un-Christ-like rhetoric that most of the critics are not consciously asking the Holy Spirit to show them the truth. *This is a big, big mistake, dear readers. I promise you, you don't want to keep making this mistake, because Jesus said the Pharisees did the same thing. Jesus said in **John 5:37-40** that the Pharisees never stopped to listen to God's voice—they just charged ahead, just them and their 'gray matter,'²⁴ to try unsuccessfully to discover God's truth:*

John 5:37-40 5:37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You people have never heard his voice nor seen his form at any time. . . . **5:39** You study the scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life, and it is these same scriptures that testify about me, **5:40** but you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.

Second, Todd Bentley and other leaders of the Lakeland outpouring are not claiming that unusual manifestations and phenomena like shaking, "vibrating," rolling around on the floor, etc., are "normative" or should be the focus in any meeting. They simply acknowledge that these things happen often when God is present in power, manifesting His healing presence and glory on people.

Third, no evidence from the Old or New Testaments demonstrates the claim that such unusual phenomena did not occur in the Early Church or in ancient Israel. There is no direct discussion in the New Testament or Old Testament showing that such phenomena were or were not "normative" or that they did or did not occur in the Early Church and in ancient Israel. But there is much direct and indirect evidence in Scripture relating some of the manifestations and phenomena to God's Spirit moving powerfully among His people.

The raw power of God and human flesh: shaking, falling, and vibrating

Let's ask the same questions about the biblical evidence that the critics are asking about Todd Bentley and the Lakeland outpouring: Was it weird or unbiblical for Ezekiel to fall over in the Lord's presence when the glory of God was manifesting where he was (**Ezek. 1:28; 2:23**)? Or was it weird and unbiblical for Daniel to fall over and tremble and shake in the presence of the angel of the Lord (**Dan. 10:8-11**)? The following passages suggest it is *normal* to tremble and shake in the Lord's presence:

Ps. 114:7--"Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord."

Jer. 5:22--"Should you not tremble in my presence?"

Or was it weird and unbiblical for Jeremiah's bones to shake, vibrate and tremble²⁵ and for him to stumble around awkwardly in a drunken state "because of

²⁴ Their brains.

²⁵The Hebrew verb in **Jer. 23:9** is *rakhafu*, which is the qal-perfect, 3rd plural, of *rakhaf* meaning "flutter, tremble, shake," as the RSV ("shake"), KJV ("shake"), and NIV ("tremble") render it (see E. Lohse, in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9, pp. 623-624; Bertram, "saleuo," in *ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 66). This meaning is suggested by Mishnaic Hebrew *rakhaf* "move, vibrate" (Jastrow, *Dictionary* s.v. which knows no attestations of this root meaning "grow soft, relax" against *BDB*'s [Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*] suggestion that *rakhaf* only here in the Hebrew Bible means "grow soft, relax" for which there is no demonstrative evidence in the text itself—see Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001], vol. 2, pp. 1219-1220); by piel forms meaning "hover (of an eagle)" in **Gen. 1:2; Deut. 32:11**; by Semitic cognates: Ugaritic *rhp* "fly, flutter"; Syriac *rekhef* "extend the wing" (J. Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der*
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the Lord and his holy words" (**Jer. 23:9**)? Was it weird for Saul, when the Spirit came upon him in Naioth at Rama, to strip off his outer clothes and lay down "prophesying" for a whole day and night (**1 Sam. 19:23-24**)? Was it weird and unbiblical for John to fall over "in the Spirit" when Christ appeared to him (**Rev. 1:10, 17**), or for Paul to fall on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:4; 26:11**), or for the soldiers and officials to fall before Jesus in the Garden (**Jn. 18:6**)? Was it weird and unbiblical for believers to stagger about intoxicated by the Holy Spirit's presence and power in Acts 2 (**Acts 2:4, 13, 15**)? The answer is obviously no, but such phenomena clearly happened when the Spirit of the Lord became manifest in glorious power, according to Scripture.

Energy, electricity, heat, and fire—yes, they're in the Bible too

Manifestations like electricity and heat are not at all foreign to biblical descriptions of the Holy Spirit's power, as the critics claim. Jesus said on occasions that He felt "power (Greek *dunamis*) had gone out from him" to heal people (**Mk. 5:30; Lk. 5:17; 6:19; 8:46**)? Such *dunamis* power going out of him healed a woman instantly (**Mk. 5:30; Lk. 8:46**), caused a paralytic to walk (**Lk. 5:17ff.**) and healed all the sick and demonized of crowds that touched him (**Lk. 6:19**). It is important to note that Greek *energeia* denoting "working, energy"²⁶ is a synonym of Greek *dunamis* "power," the word used in these passages of Jesus' healing power.²⁷ And in **Col. 1:29** and **Phil. 3:21**, Paul associates God's "power" (*dunamis*) with God's "energy (*energeia*)": **Col. 1:29**, the Greek literally says "with all His *energeia* ["working, energy"] which is working in me in *dunamis* ["power"]; **Phil 3:21** Greek literally "according to the *energeia* ["working, energy"] of his *dunasthai* ["being empowered" verbal infinitive from the same root as *dunamis*, idiomatically "by which He is empowered"] also to subject to Himself all things."

Some New Testament scholars have recognized that all these references to *dunamis* power in the accounts of Jesus' healings quite clearly approximate the modern description of electricity (and again, it is simple to "do the math" here: electrical resistance does indeed cause heat). British New Testament scholar, Dr. Cyril Powell agrees with other mainstream New Testament scholars who describe the *dunamis* power in the accounts of Jesus' healings as having the qualities of electricity:

Some of Luke's references to healing *dunamis* ["power"] call for closer examination. They seem strangely "physical." There is, for instance, the reference already noted in [**Luke**] **5:17f.**: "And it came to pass on one of those days, that he was teaching . . . and the power of the Lord was with him to heal." "In other words," comments Otto, "the charismatic power had its particular hours, when it was present for healing, and manifestly also those when it was not present. . . ."

The picture conveyed by **Luke 5:17**, several commentators have suggested, is similar to that of being filled with an electric potential. . . . The fact that so many of Jesus's miracles involve the use of touch heightens this impression. . . . Mark's comment ([**Mark**] **5:30**) leaves little doubt that he understood that this touch was felt by Jesus in such a way that He knew that *dunamis* ["power"] had gone from Him. . . . **Luke 6:19** is in the same vein: "for power came forth from him, and healed all"²⁸

ugaritischen Sprache [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974], pp. 292-293); and by the Septuagint's rendering the word with Greek *saleuo* "shake."

²⁶BDAG, p. 335; for Greek *energeia* with the meaning "energy," see **Col. 1:29** (RSV, NIV); **Phil. 3:21**; Bertram, "energeo," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 652; C. H. Powell, *The Biblical Concept of Power* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), p. 136.

²⁷A. Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM Press, 1941), p. 6.

²⁸Powell, *The Biblical Concept of Power*, pp. 108-109.

Some scholars, points out Dr. Powell, have viewed "the *dunamis* [power] mentioned here as something automatic and quasi-physical, like a fluid or operating like an electric current."²⁹ And in his 1977 Fuller Seminary doctoral dissertation on the Spirit in Paul's letters, Dr. Walter C. Wright summarized the views of mainstream New Testament scholars about the language describing the Holy Spirit and power in the New Testament: "If the extension of *ruach* [the Spirit] were expressed today, one might draw similar images from the language of electrical technology."³⁰

Shadows, handkerchiefs, and aprons: creativity without hand-wringing

We can take further questions being raised by the critics to the biblical evidence as well: Was it weird and unbiblical for people to seek healing by trying to get Peter's shadow to fall on them (**Acts 5:15**)? Clearly not. Or was it weird and unbiblical that the sick and demonized were healed by handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had touched in **Acts 19:12**? Clearly not. But the critics of the Lakeland outpouring and of the charismatic and Pentecostal movements are more than willing to criticize modern day manifestations like those described above, but they are strangely silent about the fact that the same kinds of manifestations are clearly described in Scripture.

If one wants to avoid weird manifestations, one might as well close their Bible and never read it again, because the Scriptures are full of bizarre manifestations that represent spiritual transactions and God's glory and power touching humanity. And last time I checked, no passage in Scripture suggests that the Lord is sitting on His throne in heaven, wringing His hands over whether bizarre manifestations produced by His own presence and glory will somehow lead His people astray. *He* doesn't seem to mind, so why should *we* be so concerned, as long as our focus is on Jesus, on His priority of making disciples, and on spreading the gospel and His Kingdom among the nations?

But the following bizarre manifestations described in the Scripture passages below would have driven modern heresy hunters and critics crazy, were they to have been reported today. They make Todd Bentley's "bam's" and "vibrations" look rather boring, in my opinion. They are a witness to the fact that we have a **creative** God, and He doesn't *care* what humanity thinks of His creativity!! One can see the heresy hunter blogs ablaze with alarmed statements like the following:

Gen. 15:17-18--a man claims that God made a smoking pot with a blazing torch float through the air and pass between sacrificial animal parts to signify that God made a covenant with the man.

Judges 6:34—a man claims that the Holy Spirit wrapped around him like an invisible cloak or force field of power around his body, so he could lead troops into battle.³¹

²⁹ Ibid., p. 109; compare the descriptions of other New Testament scholars--"material substance (stoffliche Substanz)" (F. Fenner, *Die Krankheit im Neuen Testament* ["Sickness in the New Testament," Leipzig, 1930], p. 83); "a power-substance (eine Kraftsubstanz)" (W. Grundmann, *Der Begriff der Kraft in der neutestamentlichen Gedankenwelt* ["The Concept of Power in the New Testament Thought World," Stuttgart, 1932], pp. 62ff.).

³⁰ W. C. Wright, "The Use of *Pneuma* in the Pauline Corpus with Special Attention to the Relationship between *Pneuma* and the Risen Christ," Ph.D. Dissertation (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1977), p. 178.; cited by Dr. M. Fatehi, *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), p. 57.

³¹ **Judges 6:34**, Hebrew literally "Then the Spirit of the Lord **clothed** [*lavshah*] Gideon." The same Hebrew verb, *lavash* "to clothe," describes the Spirit of God coming upon a prophet named Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest in **2 Chronicles 24:20**: Hebrew literally, "And the Spirit of God **clothed** (*lavshah*) Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. And he stood up before the people and said to them, "This is what God says. . . ."

- 1 Sam. 19:23-24**— a man claimed that the Holy Spirit came so forcefully on him that he had no choice but to strip off his clothes and lay down "prophesying" for a whole day and night.
- Isa. 6:7**--A man claims that a burning coal was brought to him by an angel and singed his lips to cleanse him of sin and guilt.
- Jer. 1:9**--A man claims that God's hand touched his lips to give him God's words.
- Ezek. 36:26**--A man claims that God told him that God would take a heart of stone out of a person's body and replacing it with a heart of flesh to give them a "new spirit."
- Mk. 9:7**--A man says a luminescent cloud suddenly materialized, and a voice came out it and spoke as God the Father to him.
- Jn. 1:48**-- a man claims that a messianic rabbi had a vision of him under a fig tree and that this led to his conversion and faith.
- Acts 8:39-40**--A man suddenly disappears and then reappears almost 20 miles away, claiming that God's Spirit transported him from one location to the other to do more evangelism.
- Acts 9:3-8**--A man claims that he and his friends were knocked down to the ground and that he was blinded by a brilliant shining figure in the sky speaking Aramaic to him.
- Acts 10:9-17**--A man claims that while he was praying, he fell into a trance, seeing a sheet full of camels, rabbits, pigs, eels, vultures, bats, rats, and lizards and hearing a voice say "kill and eat" (**Acts 10:11, 13; Lev. 11; Deut. 14**). He claimed that the vision means God wants him to redirect evangelistic work to non-Jews.
- Rev. 10:9-11**--a man claims that an angel told him to eat a scroll which tasted sweet but which turned his stomach sour. The man claimed that this signified he was to prophesy certain things over nations.

How weird is all that??!! If anything, these passages show that someone saying that something is weird or bizarre in someone else's testimony obviously does not in itself demonstrate any inconsistency with Scripture or with the work of the God of Scripture. What the testimony leads to--*the fruit*--in terms of where one's focus is, in terms of what is taught and in terms of how one lives, is the more crucial issue to test in the light of Scripture (**Matt. 7:20-23**; see below at the end of this paper on biblical guidelines for discerning good and bad fruit): Does the manifestation lead to a greater love and focus on Jesus? Does it lead to embracing biblical truth or to embracing error? These are the crucial questions to ask of any manifestation or spiritually unusual event.

Cataloging manifestations of God's power coming upon human bodies

The following manifestations and phenomena occurring at Lakeland and that have occurred in all outpourings, awakenings, and revivals of the Holy Spirit in the last couple of centuries and throughout Church history, are also described in Scripture. The presence of God's Spirit in power and glory may be marked in Scripture by the following:

1. **Shaking or trembling**--**Exo.** 19:16; **1 Chron.** 16:30; **Ezra** 9:4; **Psa.** 2:11; 96:9; 114:7; 119:120; **Isa.** 66:5; **Jer.** 5:22; 23:9; **Dan.** 10:10-11; **Matt.** 28:4; **Acts** 7:32; **Heb.** 12:21.

2. **Falling over**—**Gen.** 17:1, 3; **1 Kgs.** 8:11 [“the priests were not able to stand [i.e., they fell over!] to serve, because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple”]; **Ezek.** 1:28; 3:23; **Dan.** 8:17-18; 10:9; **Matt.** 28:4; **Jn.** 18:6; **Acts** 9:4 (26:14); **1 Cor.** 14:25; Rev. 1:17.
3. **Intoxicated state of mind**--**Acts** 2:4, 13, 15; **Eph.** 5:18; cf. **1 Sam.** 1:12-17; **1 Sam.** 19:23f.
4. **Bodily writhing and distortion under the influence of a demon**--**Mk.** 1:21-26; 9:26; **Lk.** 8:28.
5. **Laughing, shouting, or weeping**--**Gen.** 17:1, 3, 17³²; **Ezra** 3:13 (“rejoicing,” which certainly included laughter and shouting, is so loud that it is heard “far away” from Jerusalem—that must have been pretty loud!); **Neh.** 8:6, 9 (weeping in the midst of worship and praise); 12:43; **Ps.** 126:2; **Prov.** 14:13; **Acts** 14:10 (Greek literally “[Paul] said with a loud voice”).
6. **Prolonged exuberant praise**--**Lk.** 1:41-42 (Elizabeth “filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke out in a loud voice”); **Lk.** 1: 46-55, 64, 68-79; 5:25; 17:15; **Acts** 3:8-10.
7. **Feeling energy, electricity, heat**--**Mk.** 5:29-30 (cf. **Matt.** 9:22; **Lk.** 8:44, 46-47); **Lk.** 6:19; cf. **Col.** 1:29 (where *energeia* “working, energy”³³ is coupled in the text with *dunamis* “power”); **Judg.** 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 16:13 (the Spirit rushing like fire).³⁴
8. **Feeling deep peace**--**Rom.** 14:17; 15:13; **1 Cor.** 14:33; **Phil.** 4:5-7.
9. **Visible radiance seen on the face or around the head**--**Acts** 2:3-4 (tongues of fire); 6:15 and 7:55 (Stephen, filled with the Spirit had a radiant face)³⁵; compare **2 Cor.** 3:7, 13, 17-18 and **Exo.** 34:29 (the radiance of Moses' face is from the "Lord who is the Spirit").
10. **Trance-like state**--**Acts** 10:10ff; 22:17ff.
11. **Groaning or inarticulate sounds**--**Rom.** 8:26.

These phenomena which may accompany the presence of God's Spirit are not only attested in Scripture, but they are also attested in early Judaism³⁶ and post-biblical early Christian tradition.³⁷

³² Abraham hardly laughed just to release stress in this situation in **Gen. 17:17**, since it is immediately followed in **17:18** by his pleading with the Lord and the Lord correcting his misguided desire. Such abnormal laughter clearly came from the Lord manifesting His presence to Abraham and speaking His word to Abraham.

³³BDAG, p. 335; for Greek *energeia* with the meaning “energy,” see **Col. 1:29** (RSV, NIV); **Phil. 3:21**; Bertram, “*energeo*,” in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, p. 652; C. H. Powell, *The Biblical Concept of Power* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), p. 136.

³⁴ The Spirit of the Lord is described as “rushing upon” (Hebrew *tsalakh* “rush upon”) Samson in **Judges 14:6, 19** and **15:14**; upon Saul so that he “prophesies” in **1 Sam. 10:6, 10**; upon David when Samuel anointed him with oil in **1 Sam. 16:13**. The interesting thing about the Hebrew verb *tsalakh* “rush upon” is that it is not only used to describe the Holy Spirit being poured out on individuals, but it is also used of **fire** rushing upon Israel in **Amos 5:6**—Hebrew “Seek the LORD and live, lest **He rush** (*tsalakh*) **like fire** upon the house of Joseph; it will consume, and Bethel will have no one to quench it.”

³⁵ **Acts 6:15** says Stephen’s face was “like the face of an angel,” to which passage compare **Acts 12:7**; **Ezek. 40:3**; **Dan. 10:6**; **Lk. 2:9**; **Matt. 28:2-3**.

³⁶We should not be surprised that God’s Spirit moved among Jewish people who were not yet saved. The story in **Acts 10:1-6** of Cornelius being visited by an angel of the Lord, before he was saved, shows that God is reaching out to pre-believers through His Spirit and His angels to bring them to Jesus. So the following examples of the Holy Spirit’s power in early Judaism, represent, in my opinion, God reaching out trying to bring Jewish people to their Messiah, Jesus (**John 1:9** says of Jesus is “**1:9** [He is] the true light, who gives light to everyone, [who] was coming into the world”): The presence and power of God's Spirit was marked in early Judaism by light and radiance, radiant face (E. Sjöberg, in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6: 381-382 and nn. 250, 259); prophetic vision, knowledge, sudden inspiration (Ibid., pp. 382, n. 263; 384, n. 284; 386; cf. p. 408, n. 489).

³⁷Post-biblical Christian tradition: The presence and power of God's Spirit was marked by seeing light and radiance, inner joy, tears, contrition for sin (S. M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989], pp. 3-4) and fragrant scents (Ibid.; fragrance associated with © Gary S. Greig, Ph.D., 2008

The Early Church looked for signs of the Spirit at work

Many accounts in Scripture of Jesus, the apostles, and the Early Church healing people do not give details of just what happened when someone was prayed for and healed. But certain accounts, which recount some details, show that manifestations were paid attention to, which showed the Spirit was working and which showed that healing was taking place:

Mk. 5:29-30 (cf. Mat. 9:22; Lk. 8:44, 46-47)--The woman with the hemorrhage is said to have "felt in her body" (*egno to somati*) that the bleeding had stopped. Jesus also felt the power or energy (*dunamis = energeia*)³⁸ of God leave his body to heal her.

Lk. 6:19--Healing power (*dunamis*) was felt coming out of Jesus into the crowd, healing the sick and demonized (*dunamis par' autou exerkheto kai iato pantas* "power was coming forth from him and was healing all").

Mk. 8:23-24--When Jesus laid hands on the blind man of Bethsaida to restore his sight, Jesus asked him if anything was happening, "Do you see anything?" (**8:23**). Because the man was only partially healed and saw "people . . . like trees" (**8:24**), Jesus laid hands on him again to fully restore his sight.

Acts 9:17-18--When Ananias laid hands on Paul and prayed for him to be healed of his blindness (**9:17**), the text describes "something like scales" falling from Paul's eyes (**Acts 9:18**).

These passages suggest that Jesus and the Early Church did watch for the manifestations of God's work and healing when they prayed for and ministered to the sick and demonized. And they watched for manifestations as one of many ways of telling that the Holy Spirit was at work.

Having a healthy, biblical expectation of miracles

Critics level the charge that Todd Bentley and leaders of the Lakeland outpouring insist that miracles be a part of evangelism and the Christian life. But Todd Bentley and his colleagues do not "insist" that miracles be a part of normal Christianity. They simply teach believers to have a biblical hunger for God's presence and glory (**Psalm 63:1-5**) and to have a biblical expectation that miracles are *normal* for believers.

In fact, it is *Jesus Himself* who said that we should expect His miraculous works to be a *normal* part of the Christian life. It is *Jesus Himself* who said that everyone who believes in him would be empowered to do His miraculous works in **John 14:12** (see above). And it is God's Word in **Psalm 63:1-5** that tells us that we should have a desperate thirst and hunger for God's Presence and Glory to visit us and rest upon us:

Psalm 63:1-5 (NIV)

O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,

Christ is referred to **2 Cor. 2:14, 16**, and fragrance as a sign of the Spirit of Christ's presence in the post-biblical Early Church is related to **2 Cor. 2:14, 16** by the well-known New Testament scholar, Dr. Eberhard Nestle, "Der süsse Geruch als Erweis des Geistes [The Sweet Smell as Proof of the Spirit]," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* [ZNW] 4 [1903]: 272; ZNW 7 [1906]: 95-96; see also G. Dellling, in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, p. 495; cf. A. Stumpff, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 810).

³⁸See references above, note 33, to Greek *energeia* meaning "energy" and being synonymous with Greek *dunamis* "power."

my body longs for you,
 in a dry and weary land
 where there is no water.
 I have seen you in the sanctuary
 and beheld your power and your glory.
 Because your love is better than life,
 my lips will glorify you.
 I will praise you as long as I live,
 and in your name I will lift up my hands.
 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
 with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Objection 4: "There is no emphasis on repentance and holiness in the Lakeland meetings, as there always has been in classic revivals and awakenings throughout recent history as in the Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening."

This charge against Todd Bentley and the leaders of the Lakeland outpouring is not true either. Anyone who is attentive and who has watched or visited the meetings in Lakeland can attest to the fact that purity of heart, holiness, and keeping our focus on Jesus, are themes that Todd Bentley and the other leaders have repeatedly emphasized. I personally have heard Todd and the other leaders make repeated reference to **Psalm 24** and its well-known themes of purity of heart and holiness:

Psalm 24:3-6 (NIV)

Psalm 24:3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?
 Who may stand in his holy place?

Psalm 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
 who does not lift up his soul to an idol
 or swear by what is false.

Psalm 24:5 He will receive blessing from the LORD
 and vindication from God his Savior.

Psalm 24:6 Such is the generation of those who seek him,
 who seek your face, O God of Jacob. *Selah*

I've also personally heard the Lakeland leaders make reference to **Jeremiah 17:9** that "the heart is deceitful above all things" and to the fact that we need to ask Jesus to help us "crucify our flesh" and "purify our hearts," to "burn out every impurity" that stands in His way in our lives. I've personally heard Todd Bentley say repeatedly to keep our eyes on Jesus and that the miracles are wonderful, but that they are nothing compared to loving the Lord Himself alone as our true treasure. And Todd does emphasize the importance of repentance and holiness for revival in his book, *The Reality of the Supernatural World*:

Repentance opens the heavens, and obedience keeps it open. . . . Let me repeat. *Repentance opens heaven, and obedience keeps it open.*³⁹

³⁹ Bentley, *The Reality of the Supernatural World*, p. 135.

Objection 5: "We should not be teaching people to interact with angels. Satan masquerades as an angel of light and people can be deceived by demonic angels like Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was deceived by the deceptive, demonic angel 'Moroni.'"

We know that not only heresy hunters but also concerned leaders in the Body of Christ have expressed this concern. Yes, we agree that we can be deceived by demons masquerading as angels who bring false gospels and false messages to us, as **Galatians 1:8** and **2 Corinthians 11:14** affirm, and as happened in Joseph Smith's case:

Gal. 1:8--1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell!

2 Cor 11:14--11:14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

And we agree that Joseph Smith's being deceived by the false angel Moroni is precisely described by **Colossians 2:18-19**:

Col. 2:18-19-- 2:18 Let no one who delights in humility and the *worship of angels* pass *judgment* on you. That person goes on at great lengths about what he has supposedly seen, but *he is puffed up* with empty notions by his *fleshly* mind. **2:19** *He has not held fast to the head* from whom the whole body, supported and knit together through its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God. [bold and italics mine]

The worship of angels, involving human prayers and expressions of praise to angels, was a real problem in first century AD popular Judaism.⁴⁰ The kind of person Paul is describing here not only *worships* angels but he is also *proud* ("puffed up), *fleshly*, *judgmental*, and he has *lost his focus on Jesus* ("he has not held fast to the head"). So it is a mix of pride, judgmentalism, fleshliness, and a *lack of focus on Jesus the head*, that is associated in this passage with one being deceived by false, demonic angels.

⁴⁰ This is now disputed by scholars of early Judaism and early Christianity, but the following evidence is clear enough that there was a problem in early Judaism: Israeli historian and epigrapher, Prof. Mordechai Margoloth's publication of the 3rd-to-4th century AD Jewish "Book of Secrets" shows that it was a collection of Jewish magical spells (witchcraft) that contain invocations for help (*prayers*) and statements of *praise* to angels—praise and prayer are the two elements that make up New Testament worship (as is clear in **Revelation 7:11, 12** and **8:3** where the "worship" [*proskunein 7:11*] in heaven consists of statements of praise [*eulogia* "blessing," *doxa* "glory," etc. **Rev. 7:12**] that are followed by "prayers" [*proseukhe Rev. 8:3*]): M. Margoloth, *Sefer Ha-Razim [The Book of Secrets]: A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966). Jewish synagogues in the land of Israel from the 5th and 6th centuries AD (Beit Alpha, Tiberias, Beit Shean, Sepphoris) have mosaics depicting angels with pagan and Zodiac names mentioned in the "Book of Secrets" prayers, (See Dr. Lee I. Levine, *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982], p. 9, and Dr. Lester Ness, *Astrology and Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Ph.D. Dissertation [Oxford, OH: Miami University, 1990], chapter 5 conclusion [<http://www.smoe.org/arcana/diss5.html>]).

This kind of angel-worship in early Judaism goes back to the first century AD. The same kind of attention in first century AD popular Judaism to angels, designated by pagan and Zodiac names, is attested in first century AD Jewish inscriptions in a synagogue in Gorgippia (modern Anapa on the northern coast of the Black Sea) calling on angels to witness and enforce transactions described in the inscriptions (L. I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* [Yale University Press, 2005], pp. 122-123).

On angel worship and veneration in early popular Judaism also see Rebecca Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*, (Harrisburg, PA, 1998), pp. 336-343; Michael A. Morgan (*Sefer ha-Razim: Book of the Mysteries* (Scholars Press, 1983); L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), p. 195 (examples of prayers and praise to angels); pp. 200ff.; Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), pp. 10, 62f., 269, 310-12; M. Mach, *Entwicklungsstudien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* [Studies in the Development of Jewish Belief in Angels in the Pre-Rabbinic Period] (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), pp. 296-300; S. Lyonnet, "Paul's Adversaries in Colossae," in Francis and Meeks, *Conflict at Colossae* (Scholars Press, 1973), pp. 151-153.

Golden bowl prayer and worship has only Father God's address on it

And yes, clearly we are not to *worship* angels or *pray* to them. Todd Bentley stated this in his book, *The Reality of the Supernatural*.⁴¹ **Revelations 19:10** and **Judges 13:16** make it clear that we are to worship the Lord alone and not the angels. And the Scriptures show that prayers are to be addressed to the Lord and not angels. Both Old and New Testament portray prayer being addressed to God, not angels. **1 Timothy 2:5** says that Jesus is the sole mediator between God and humanity. The passage makes it clear that Jesus doesn't share that mediatorial role with angels or saints in heaven:

1 Tim. 2:5—(NIV) For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Revelation 5:8 and **8:3-4** describe the prayers of the saints as golden bowls and incense, and the golden bowl and incense prayers in heaven are offered by the angels to God alone, not to other angels and saints.

I am convinced that Todd Bentley, Bob Jones, and Rick Joyner, and other leaders in the prophetic movement would agree entirely with theologians like Karl Barth and Calvin, who said that biblically believers must take seriously the fact of angelic presence with believers.⁴² The Reformer, John Calvin urges us "not to deny that angels were created according to God's likeness, inasmuch as our highest perfection, as Christ testifies, will be to become like them [**Matt. 22:30**]."⁴³ And I am convinced that these prophetic leaders also agree with Barth and Calvin, cautioning against giving angels attention for their own sake without focusing on Jesus, "for there is no 'special, autonomous or abstract experience of angels in and for themselves,'"⁴⁴ and because, as Cambridge University astronomer and evangelical theologian, Dr. Lawrence Osborn, says, true Christian encounter with an angel will always "direct us to God"⁴⁵ rather than directing us to focus on angels, on saints, on self, or on man.

Prayer and worship, no. Interaction, yes. Back to discerning the fruit

Now, having said all this, it is also true that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, from Genesis to Revelation, interaction between God's people and angels is **normal**. The biblical evidence showing that God's people encountered angels regularly, proves this point (see below). So interaction with angels should be a *given* today. The real issue is that when believers have angelic encounters, we need to learn to "test the spirits" (**1 John 4:1**) and to discern the content of angelic messages (**Gal. 1:8; 2 Cor.**

⁴¹ Bentley, *The Reality of the Supernatural World*, p. 146.

⁴² John Calvin wrote that angels are "not qualities or inspirations without substance, but true spirits," Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Library of Christian Classics, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:14:9, 169; See also Eastern Orthodox theologian Vincent Rossi, "The Ecology of Angels: Angelic Hierognosis in Eastern Orthodox Tradition," *Epiphany Journal* 16 (1996), p. 6: "[Christians must] take full account of the fact of angelic visitation and communication."

⁴³ John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:15:3, 188.

⁴⁴ Quoted by Princeton Seminary educated theologian, Dr. Seng-Kong Tan, "An Ecumenical Doctrine of Angels and Its Practical Significance," *Theandros* 1 (2003/4): 2 and note 10; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III/3. *The Doctrine of Creation*, translated by G.W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich and edited by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960), Chapter XI, § 51:3, pp. 477-478.

⁴⁵ L. Osborn, "Entertaining Angels: Their Place in Contemporary Theology." In *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (Nov 1994): 294; this article emphasizes that evangelicals need more reflection on the reality of angels.

11:14) to know what is from God and what is not from God.⁴⁶ We need to learn to discern the *fruit* of angelic encounters (**Matt. 7:15-23**)—do they preserve the truth of the gospel and the Word of God? Do they lead us to love and serve Jesus more and to love our neighbor as ourselves? Or do they lead us to be focused on angels themselves (or anything other than Jesus), to be self-focused, to love ourselves, to love money, to love the praise of man, etc.?

In **Revelation 19:10** the apostle John falls down to worship an angel, but the angel prevents John from doing so, saying “Do not do this! I am only a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony about Jesus. Worship God, for the testimony about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The angels are *fellow servants* with us in the household of God. And if we are sons and daughters in our Father’s household, and through His Spirit He is closer than a friend to us as our “Abba [Aramaic for ‘Daddy’ or ‘Papa’]” (**Rom 8:15**), we are *naturally* not to take our prayer requests to the fellow servants, the angels, for them to take them to our Father, but we are to go to Him directly and, as Todd Bentley has emphasized, to “approach [His] throne of grace with confidence” (**Heb. 4:16**). We have direct access to God our Father through the blood of Jesus:

Heb. 10:19-22--10:19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since ***we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 10:20*** by the fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, **10:21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **10:22 *let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings,*** because we have had our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. [boldface and italics mine]

Focusing on Father God and interacting with His household servants

But does our direct access to God the Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, mean that we are not to talk to angels at all or interact with them, when the Holy Spirit brings us into contact with them? Of course not! From Genesis to Revelation God’s people talk to and interact with angels.⁴⁷ Just read your Bible and before long you’ll see one account after another of God’s angels interacting with His people. And from Genesis to Revelation, God’s people interacted with God’s angels without them losing their primary focus on loving and serving God alone. Indeed, passages like **Hebrews 13:2**, that speaks of entertaining angels unaware, and **Galatians 4:14**, that says that the Galatians received Paul gladly as if he were “an angel of God,” suggest that we should be ready to *welcome* God’s angels in our daily walk with the Lord, because they come with the presence of the Holy Spirit (see below), they share the goal of advancing God’s Kingdom with us, and they are present with us to help us worship and serve the Lord.⁴⁸ Following is a preliminary, but incomplete, list of references from Scripture:

Angels interacting with God’s people in Old and New Testaments:⁴⁹

Old Testament: Abraham, **Gen. 18:2; 22:11-18**; Hagar, in the wilderness, **Gen. 16:7**; Lot, in Sodom, **Gen. 19:1-17**; Jacob, in his various visions,

⁴⁶ We can use the criteria in **1 John 4:1-3** to test angelic spirits by saying, “I command you in Jesus’ name to identify yourself! I command you in Jesus’ name to reveal whether you serve Jesus and whether you affirm that Jesus came from God, took on human flesh, and is Lord of all.”

⁴⁷ G. Kittel, in id., ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 86-87, discusses key NT passages that show that interaction with angels was a normal part of NT church life.

⁴⁸ See the discussion on angelic visitation today by Cambridge University astronomer and evangelical theologian, Dr. Lawrence Osborn, “Entertaining Angels: Their Place in Contemporary Theology,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 273-296.

⁴⁹ Cited by the NET Bible online resources: <http://net.bible.org/dictionary.php?word=Angel>

[Gen. 28:12](#); Moses, [Ex. 3:2](#); Israelites, [Ex. 14:19](#); [Judg. 2:1-4](#); Balaam, [Num. 22:31](#); Joshua, "the captain of the Lord's army," [Josh. 5:15](#); Gideon, [Judg. 6:11-22](#); Manoah and his wife, [Judg. 13:6, 15-20](#); David, at the threshing floor of Araunah, [2 Sam. 24:16, 17](#); [1 Chr. 21:15, 16](#); Elijah, while he lay under the juniper tree, [1 Kgs 19:5-11](#); Isaiah, [Isa. 6:1-8](#); Ezekiel in visions of cherubim carrying the throne and glory of the Lord, [Ezek. 1:5-24](#); [3:12-13](#); [9:3](#); [10:1-20](#); [11:22](#); Daniel, in the lions' den and in subsequent visions, [Dan. 6:22](#); [8:16](#); [9:21](#); [10:5-10](#), [16, 18](#); [12:5-7](#); Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the fiery furnace, [Dan. 3:25, 28](#); Zechariah, in visions, [Zech. 2:3](#); [3:1, 2](#); [4:1](#); [5:5ff](#); [6:1ff](#).

New Testament: Joseph, in a dream, [Matt. 1:20](#); [2:13, 19](#); Mary, concerning Jesus, [Luke 1:26-38](#); Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, [Luke 1:11-20, 26-38](#); the shepherds, [Luke 2:9-11, 13, 14](#); Jesus, after his temptation, [Matt. 4:11](#); at the transfiguration of Jesus, [Matt. 17:3](#); [Luke 9:30, 31](#); in Gethsemane, [Luke 22:43](#); at the tomb of Jesus, [Matt. 28:2-5](#); [Mark 16:5-7](#); [Luke 24:23](#); [John 20:12](#); the ascension, [Acts 1:10, 11](#); Peter and John, while in prison, [Acts 5:19](#); Philip, [Acts 8:26](#); Cornelius, in a vision before he is even saved, [Acts 10:3, 30-32](#); Peter, in prison, [Acts 12:7-11](#); Paul, on the way to Damascus, [Acts 27:23](#); John, in Patmos, [Rev. 1:1](#); [5:2](#); [7:11](#); [10:9](#); [11:1](#); [17:7](#); [19:10](#); [22:8](#).

The biblical evidence demonstrates, then, that we, as God's people, can still talk to and listen to the angelic fellow servants of God's household, as long as our heart still belongs to our Father—as long as our dependence, our devotion and our primary attention is on our Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Swiss New Testament scholar, Professor Gottlob Schrenk, described the regular interaction of angels and God's people in the New Testament with these words: "The heavenly and earthly are constantly inter-related and there is express emphasis on the angelic powers ([Eph. 1:10](#); [3:10](#), cf. [Col. 1:16, 20](#)); the *anakephaliosasthai ta panta en Khristo* ["bringing together under one head of all things in Christ"] and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the *ekklesia* [Church] (the mystery) are linked together on this view."⁵⁰

A resurrected computer and a stopgap repair from an angel of the Lord

My wife Catherine and I lived by faith for five years, while we had a ministry called the University Prayer Network, in which we networked over 300 student prayer leaders on 36 university and college campuses in the USA and abroad to train students how to pray for revival and how to hear God's voice, depend on the Holy Spirit and move in power evangelism. We communicated daily with student leaders by the Internet and phone and traveled to campuses to train them on-site. One day, my Mac PowerBook laptop computer had broken at the hinges and the screen would no longer stay up by itself. What's worse, the power supply also died the same day. I pressed the power button repeatedly but the computer would not start up. So the screen wouldn't stay up and there was no evidence that the computer was ever going to start-up again. Obviously I needed the computer to keep the ministry communication going between campuses, but we did not have the money to get it fixed or replaced, since we were living on a shoe-string budget.

As I prayed and asked the Lord Jesus what to do with the dead computer, I received a vision of an angel standing next to me to help me, and I heard the Holy

⁵⁰ G. Schrenk, "Patria," in Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, p. 1018.
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Spirit tell me to lay hands on the computer and pray like I would pray for healing over a person. So I laid my hand on it, said "Come Holy Spirit, release Your power on this computer," and then, at the Holy Spirit's prompting, I commanded the power to come back on. I pressed the power button, and to my surprise the computer powered up! (Jesus can resurrect computers too!) Then the Lord told me to pay attention to the angel who was holding something in his hand. I looked closely in the vision. The angel showed me a brace-like object that would hold up the broken screen of the laptop, and then he showed me how to make the brace out of plexi-glass and copper wiring. Then the angel told me where I would find the materials to make what he had shown me at Lowes, the local hardware store. I went to Lowes and found the materials right where I was shown. I successfully built the brace, and it held up my computer screen for two and half years(!) after that time and enabled us to continue communicating with student leaders on the campuses, training them and encouraging them in the Lord!

Now, did that interaction with an angel of the Lord, helping me keep the ministry computer functioning, lead me to get my focus off of Jesus? Obviously not. It made me love Him even more, and it gave me and my wife Catherine great happiness to know that we are not alone but that we are helped in serving the Lord by His holy angels! Both of my children have had experiences where their guardian angels have appeared to them and let them know they are there watching over them, and the fruit of those encounters has been a tremendous comfort knowing that they are protected and cared for by God and His angels.

No plans to become false prophets in our household

We have had countless experiences of seeing and interacting with angels like these in our household over the past 15 years. In none of these angelic experiences did we have any sudden urges to go and write new Scripture, to start false religious followings, or to create weird new doctrines, like Joseph Smith did. . . . Really. . . . There is *safety* in the household of God, as long as we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand (**1 Pet. 5:5-9**), declare our utter dependence on Jesus in all things, and with His Spirit's guidance discern the fruit of our spiritual experiences.

Indeed, the Early Church Father and theologian, Origen of Alexandria, in 233-234 AD said in his homily "On Prayer" about the mention of the angels in corporate worship in **1 Cor. 11:10** that "when the saints are gathered together there is a double church, the one of men [humans], the other of angels."⁵¹ This shows that the post-biblical Early Church expected that the presence of angels in the life and the worship of believers was *normal*.

God's people speaking God's words to angels

Some leaders who believe in angelic encounters today, nevertheless have the misguided notion that God's people are never to command angels to do anything. While I agree that believers cannot give commands to angels whenever they feel like it (angels only obey the word of the Lord not merely human words, according to **Psalm 103:20**), there are examples in Scripture of God's people under the leading of the Holy Spirit speaking commands and speaking God's words to angels. For example in **Psalm 103:20-22**, David commands the angels to praise the Lord. The Hebrew text uses imperative forms, the command form of the language:

⁵¹ J. E. L. Oulton and H. Chadwick, eds., *Alexandrine Christianity* (Philadelphia, PN: Westminster Press, 1954), vol 2, pp. 325-27 (31.5).
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Psalm 103:20-21

103:20 Praise (Qal plural imperative) the Lord, you angels of his,
you powerful warriors who carry out his decrees
and obey his orders!

103:21 Praise (Qal plural imperative) the Lord, all you warriors of his,
you servants of his who carry out his desires!

And in **Revelation 1:20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14**, Jesus tells John to write Jesus' words to the angels of each of the seven churches in Asia Minor. These angels are not metaphorical representatives over the churches, as Kittel concludes from internal evidence in Revelation.⁵² The fact that these angels are receiving Jesus' messages and His commands to the congregations that they are assigned to, suggests that they are among the angels who witness the deeds of God's people, that are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (**1 Cor. 11:10; 1 Tim. 5:21**). In the case of the seven churches, these angels would be witnessing the reactions of believers in these churches to the words of Jesus, to observe and record if they react obediently or not (**Ezek 9:2-3**).

Learning to pass on God's words to the angels leads to very good fruit

My wife Catherine and I were at a meeting in 2003, where we were teaching student leaders how to hear God's voice, depend on the Holy Spirit, and move in power evangelism to share Jesus with others on their campus at the College of William and Mary, America's second oldest college (founded 1693 after the first college, Harvard College, was founded in 1636). As we worshiped, a strong thick presence of the Holy Spirit descended on the meeting (it was glorious!). One student, whom I will call Alice, was so deeply demonized that she would start shutting down completely and become catatonic, when the Holy Spirit came in power in the meetings. She was in deep need of inner healing for wounds of molestation she had suffered as a child, through which many demons had entered her and afflicted her all her life. As Catherine and I were praying over Alice at the meeting, with two other student leaders, Alice went into an unnatural catatonic state, as if she were asleep standing up. We commanded the demons in Jesus' name to loose her, but she did not "wake up" and nothing happened. So I asked the Holy Spirit what to do, and He told me to quietly command the attending angels on either side of Alice to go and break the demons off of her. I quietly whispered so that Alice could not hear, "Angels of healing, be loosed to break the demons hold off of Alice now." Immediately Alice snapped back awake and opened her eyes! We were all amazed, and we were then able to pray with her, helping her give the many wounds in her memories to Jesus, who healed her and set her free. After Jesus had healed her memories, the demons were easily expelled by us, and Alice was new woman, who now shares her faith in Jesus and prays powerfully over other students to this day, praise the Lord! Thus, the *fruit* of that angelic encounter was *very good!*

Objection 6: "It's wrong and misguided for us to describe angels in detail or to mention their names. This will get our focus off of Jesus."

Oh really? Then we have to say that Moses (**Exo 3:2**), Manoah and his wife (Samson's parents, **Judges 13:1-23**), the prophet Isaiah (**Isa. 6:1-8**), the prophet Ezekiel (**Ezek. 1:5-24; 3:12-13; 9:3; 10:1-20; 11:22**), the prophet Daniel (**Dan. 8:15-17; 9:21; 10:4-7; 12:6-7**), and the prophet Zechariah (**Zech. 1:8ff; 2:1f; 3:3ff; 4:1ff.; 5:9ff.; 6:1ff**) were all on dangerous ground, because they gave descriptions of angels—some with great detail—of their appearances and actions, in some cases

⁵² Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-74], vol. 1, pp. 86-87.

mentioning their names ("Gabriel," "Michael," "Wonderful" [Hebrew *pil'i*⁵³]). I don't recall ever reading any convincing evidence that these prophets somehow got their focus off of the Lord God, because they described angels, in some cases in significant detail. So, I don't believe there is anything wrong when Bob Jones or Todd Bentley or other prophetic leaders describe details and names of angels that God has caused to appear to them. Again I would ask the question, "What is the *fruit* of such descriptions?" I think it is self-evident to any unbiased observer that the fruit of both Bob Jones' and Todd Bentley's descriptions of angels has been to focus people on the Lord Jesus and His plans and power for His people. The many times I have heard or read their descriptions of angelic encounters, they have not merely focused on the angels or on the angelic encounters for their own sake, but their remarks have always ended with a focus on what Father God and the Lord Jesus are saying, focusing on God's desire that the Body of Christ mature into His holiness, His power, and His heart to save the lost.

Objection 7: "There is no such thing as angels manifesting themselves as female angels in Scripture. Jesus taught that angels are genderless. So talk of female angels with female names is New Age deception."

This claim is not true when one examines the relevant biblical passages carefully. The evidence for angels manifesting themselves with female form as well as with male form may not be abundant but there is clear evidence in Scripture that this is the case, and the evidence is tied to a core doctrine of biblical theology, the doctrine of humanity being created in the image of God as Father of all creation.

Are angels genderless? Well that question takes some time to answer, because I believe the question has to do with their *manifested forms* rather than their essential nature, which is spirit (see below). **Mark 12:25** and its parallel passages, **Matt. 22:30** and **Luke 20:36**, say that the angels *do not marry* in heaven, and *not* that the angels do not manifest themselves with gender distinctions:

Mark 12:25—12:25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Matt. 22:30—22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Luke 20:36—20:36 In fact, they can no longer die, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, since they are sons of the resurrection.

Fire, wind, horses, and chariots—the manifold forms angels can assume

Quoting **Psalm 104:4**, the writer of **Hebrews** says that the angels were created by God to be able to manifest themselves, among other forms, as "fire" and "wind": **Heb. 1:7** (NIV) "In speaking of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.'" Fire, for example, is precisely the form that the cherubim angels manifested themselves with in Ezekiel's vision in **Ezekiel 1:5, 13**. The Greek text of **Hebrews 1:7** says that the God "makes" (present active participle of *poiein*) the angels to be "winds"⁵⁴ and "fire." The well known evangelical New

⁵³ That "Wonderful" was the angel's actual name in **Judges 13:18** was pointed out by Old Testament scholar, Prof. H. W. Robinson: "The angel's very name is *pil'i*, 'wonderful,' 'beyond human understanding'" (H. W. Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* [Oxford University Press, 1946], p. 38).

⁵⁴ The Greek *pneumata* in **Hebrews 1:7** has both the connotation "spirits" and the connotation "winds," but Philip E. Hughes observes that "the rendering 'winds' rather than 'spirits' is contextually required [in **Heb 1:7**] . . . for, if the latter were correct, then a consistently parallel interpretation should be sought for the description of God's servants as fiery flames" (P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977], pp. 61-62).

Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, commented on this passage, suggesting that it emphasizes the fact that the angels were made by God to be "evanescent" or mutable:⁵⁵ that is, God made them so that as spirit-beings ("ministering spirits" **Heb. 1:14**) they could manifest themselves in different forms, in this case in forms that behave like "fire" and "wind". In **Zechariah 1:8-13** angels manifest in the form of a man and in the form of horses,⁵⁶ and in **Zechariah 6:1-5** angels manifest themselves as chariots and horses.⁵⁷ Dr. W. H. Bennett describes the various forms these angels appear in:

The visions of Zechariah are shown to him by angels, and are also partly visions of the doings of angels. They are variously spoken of as *mal'akh* ["angel"], "man," "horses," and "chariots"; the latter are identified with the four winds. These 'angels' are the ministers of Yahweh and reveal His will.⁵⁸

The fact that the angels are spirits (**Heb. 1:14**) which can manifest themselves as fire, wind, horses, and chariots, suggests that their essential nature can be made to appear in whatever form God determines for them for any given context. St. John of Damascus, an 8th century AD Church Father and theologian, described the created nature of angels with this kind of mutability, that their manifested form is capable of being changed from appearance to appearance: "Through the Word . . . all the angels were created. . . . It is not as they really are that they reveal themselves to the worthy men, to whom God wishes them to appear, but in a changed form which the beholders are capable of seeing."⁵⁹

Guardian angels and mirroring God's image in humans

Passages like **Matthew 18:10** and **Acts 12:15** make it clear that Jesus and the Early Church took for granted that guardian angels were assigned to each person. In **Matthew 18:10** Jesus said of children that "**18:10** . . . their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." And New Testament scholar, Dr. Craig Keener, describes the majority view among New Testament scholars that the passage refers to guardian angels:

⁵⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 58-59.

⁵⁶ David Kimhi and Gustav Davidson are certainly right that the horses are the angels who are described as the "four winds," since the demonstrative pronoun "these" of **Zech. 1:9** can refer only to the "horses" of **Zech. 1:8**, and not to any other antecedent in the co-text (Rabbi David Kimhi, *Commentary upon the Prophecies of Zechariah* [London, 1837], pp. 5-6; G. Davidson, *Dictionary of Angels* [Free Press, 1967], p. 142: "Horses—a term for angels as in Zech. 6:2-5"); Old Testament scholars like Bennett and Merrill came to the same conclusion: see next two notes.

⁵⁷ See the preceding note and also Dr. Eugene Merrill's comments on **Zech 6:1-8** (E. H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi—An Exegetical Commentary* [Biblical Studies Press, 2003], pp. 166-167): "In response to Zechariah's question as to the identification and meaning of the horses and chariots (**Zech 6:4**), the interpreting messenger said they were heavenly spirits, four in all. . . . The heavenly scene from which these spirits have come is that of the Sovereign ('*adon*) of all the earth, who is surrounded by His council. . . . Such a scene is fairly common in the OT (cf. **1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps. 82:1; Isa 6:1**). . . . Four of these chariots or spirits have presented themselves before Him to attend to His bidding. Spirits often appear in the OT as ministers of Yahweh. The term [spirit] . . . is likely interchangeable with angels or to be taken as an extension of YHWH [Yahweh]. David encourages the angels of YHWH to bless Him . . . (**Ps. 103:20-21**; cf. **Heb. 1:14**). The author of the very next psalm [**Psalm 104**] extols YHWH, 'who makes spirits [or winds] His messengers (and) flames of fire His servants' (Ps. 104:4)."

⁵⁸ W. H. Bennett, *The Religion of the Post-Exilic Prophets* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), p. 169.

⁵⁹ St. John of Damascus, "Concerning Angels," in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, P. Schaff, H. Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 9, Book 2, chp. 3.

The majority view and the most satisfactory interpretation of this passage . . . would refer to guardian angels. . . . The guardian angels of these children were of the highest rank (18:10), indicating their special place before God.⁶⁰

Two other New Testament scholars, W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, describe further aspects of guardian angels in **Matthew 18:10**:

The notion, often supported by appeal to **Mt. 18.10**, that each individual Christian has a guardian angel, has been a not insignificant element in popular Christian piety The church Fathers discussed whether **Mt. 18.10** implies that every individual has an angel (Chrysostom said yes). . . whether wickedness can drive one's guardian angel away (Origen and Jerome so thought [and so did the desert Fathers of 4th century AD Egypt]) . . . whether one could be looked after by more than one angel (**Mt. 18.13** seemed to imply an affirmative answer to this last question). . . . Calvin . . . (*Inst.* 1:14.6-7) . . . citing **Mt. 18.13** and **Lk. 16.22** (Lazarus is carried to Abraham's bosom by angels), . . . held for certain 'that each of us is cared for not by one angel merely, but that all with one consent watch for our safety.'⁶¹

"It must be his angel"??!!—Not a typical quote from today's Western Church

Acts 12:1-15 tells of how King Herod had imprisoned and executed James, the brother of John, and how Herod then put Peter in jail, planning to execute him as well. The church was earnestly praying for Peter (**12:5**), and an angel of the Lord appeared in Peter's prison cell and took him out of the prison. When Peter arrived at John Mark's house, where many people were praying for him, the servant girl named Rhoda answered him at the door. Rhoda rushed back into the house and told everyone "Peter is at the door!" (NIV **12:14**). But they all responded by saying that Rhoda was out of her mind and they said "It must be his angel"⁶² (NIV **12:15**), clearly suggesting that they thought it was Peter's guardian angel at the door and not Peter himself. This clearly shows that those praying for Peter assumed that Peter's guardian angel could look and sound just like Peter. German New Testament scholar, Dr. Gerhard Kittel, points out that **Acts 12:15** shows the Early Church's assumed that guardian angels may manifest themselves with the same appearance and voice as the person they are assigned to guard:

[Regarding] the idea of the guardian, or better the directing and ministering angel . . . **Acts 12:15** assumes a likeness in appearance and voice between the *angelos* [angel] and the man concerned.⁶³

⁶⁰ C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 451.

⁶¹ W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew 8-18* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), p. 772.

⁶² Greek, literally "It is his angel" (*ho angelos estin autou*); in the western textual tradition of Greek manuscripts (D [Codex Bezae and Codex Claromontanus], 5th-6th AD; and Syriac Peshitta, 5th-6th centuries AD), the Greek (which the Syriac version reflects) of **Acts 12:15** softens the statement by adding *tukhon* "perhaps": *tukhon ho angelos estin autou* "Perhaps it is his angel" (B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [United Bible Societies, 1971], p. 395).

⁶³ G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-74], vol. 1, p. 86; parallel concepts in early Judaism are cited by H. L. Strack, and P. Billerbeck. *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* [Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash] (Munich: Becksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922-1961), vol. 2, p. 707.

The clear implication of this fact is that guardian angels are made by God to be able to manifest themselves in the human form of those they are assigned to in order to reflect the image of God in us humans whom they serve. Princeton Seminary educated theologian, Dr. Seng-Kong Tan describes it this way:

Echoing Justin and Tertullian, Calvin . . . affirms that God is Father to both humanity and angels through Christocentric filiation [*Institutes*, 2:14:5, 488; 3:20:40, 903]. . . . A doctrine of the *imago Dei* [image of God] that includes the angelic realm grounds Christian angelology, as it should, within the doctrine of the Trinity. For, when the Church proclaims that the 'one God' has created 'all that is seen and unseen,' she is affirming nothing less than a doctrine of angels, which is circumscribed within the Trinitarian structure and content of the Nicene Creed.⁶⁴

"In the image of God He made him, male and female He made them" (Gen. 1:27)

When we confront the issue of God making guardian angels so that they may manifest themselves to reflect God's image in humanity, we must deal with the fact that God created humanity in His image as *male and female*. This is made absolutely clear when the prosaic Hebrew narrative structure of **Genesis 1**, describing the creation of all things, suddenly breaks out in poetic verse structure in **Gen. 1:27**, to celebrate, as the pinnacle of God's creation, the creation of humanity, male and female, in God's image:

Gen. 1:24-28 (NIV)

¶ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. **Gen. 1:25** God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:26

¶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Gen. 1:27

¶ *So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

Gen. 1:28

¶ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule⁶⁵ over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

⁶⁴ Seng-Kong Tan, "An Ecumenical Doctrine of Angels and Its Practical Significance," *Theandros* 1 (2003/4): 2-3 and notes 12-13.

⁶⁵ The command to rule over all creation on behalf of God in **Gen. 1:28** is a plural imperative form (Qal plural imperative of *radah*), showing the command is to both the male and the female to rule over all creation on behalf of God. The concept of ruling creation involves humble servant leadership—leading and serving creation as a servant—as is shown by the fact that the Lord placed the first man and his wife in the Garden of Eden to "to work it and take care of it" (**Gen. 2:15**). Thus the highest form of life, the man and the woman, were to serve the lowest form of life, the garden plants and trees, as a regular component of their "ruling" all creation. Jesus explained God's heart for servant leadership by saying, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." (**Mark 10:42-44**).

Genesis 5:1-2 repeats the same theme that the Lord created humanity, male and female, in His "likeness" (Hebrew *d^emut*, a synonym of *tselem* "image" used in **Gen. 1:27**):

Gen. 5:1-2— 5:1 . . . When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. **5:2** He created them male and female; when they were created, he blessed them and named them "humankind."

Professors J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson point out how Genesis emphasizes the image of God in male and female humanity:

Genesis affirms that every human being, male and female, is created in God's image to represent him and exercise dominion on his behalf.⁶⁶

And Professor Walter Brueggemann describes the way that **Genesis 1:27** portrays male and female reflecting the image of God:

The statement of verse 27 [**Gen. 1:27**] is not an easy one. But it is worth noting that humankind is spoken of as *singular* ("he created him") and *plural* ("he created them"). . . . On the one hand, humankind is a single entity. All human persons stand in solidarity before God. But on the other hand, humankind is a community, male and female. And none is the full image of God alone. Only in community of humankind is God reflected.⁶⁷

God the Father and the motherly aspects of His nature

The mystery of male and female attributes together reflecting the image of God is reflected in statements about God's nature in Scripture. God is clearly identified as divine Father, not divine Mother, in Scripture: **Exo 4:22; 2 Sam 7:14; Psa 103:13; Matt 6:9,14,26; 28:19; Jn 1:12,13, 18; Acts 17:24-28; Rom 1:18; 2:1-9; 8:14,19; 2 Cor 11:31; Col 1:13; Eph 3:14; 1 Jn 3:1**. But Scripture also makes clear that within His nature as Father, God also has the qualities of motherhood and womanhood, and this fact is the obvious reason that male humanity only reflects God's image together with female humanity:

Isa. 49:14-15— 49:14 Zion said, 'The Lord has abandoned me, the sovereign master has forgotten me.'**49:15** Can a woman forget her baby who nurses at her breast? Can she withhold compassion from the child she has borne? Even if mothers were to forget, I could never forget you!

Isa 66:13—66:13 As a mother consoles a child, so I will console you, and you will be consoled over Jerusalem.

Indeed, the communion between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is reflected in the communion of male and female in marriage. As Brueggemann said above, "none is the full image of God alone. Only in community of humankind is God reflected."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 37.

⁶⁷ W. Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Philadelphia, PN: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 34.

⁶⁸ See preceding note.

The 'Imago Dei' and the angels: Justin, Tertullian, and Calvin

The evidence presented above has established two facts so far: (1) the fact that God's image is reflected in both male and female humanity (**Gen. 1:27**), and (2) the fact that guardian angels were made by God to be able to manifest themselves with the appearance of those they are assigned to guard (**Acts 12:15**), in order to reflect the image of God in us humans, whom they serve. And these two facts, in turn, clearly suggest that if guardian angels manifest themselves with the male appearance of the male humans that they are assigned to guard—as was the Church's assumption about Peter's angel in **Acts 12:15**—then for female humans, it is obvious that guardian angels may manifest themselves with the female appearance of the female humans they are assigned to guard. And this is why the manifested forms of guardian angels would be incomplete if they only assumed male forms: only if guardian angels manifest themselves in both male and female forms would they fully reflect the image of God the Father and correspond to the appearance of both the human men and women that they are assigned to guard. The assumption reflected in **Acts 12:15** that guardian angels take on the appearance of the humans they are assigned to guard clearly implies this conclusion, as well as the dual male-female reflection of God's image in the humans that guardian angels may manifest themselves to resemble.

As was quoted above, Dr. Seng-Kong Tan reminds us that Justin Martyr,⁶⁹ Tertullian,⁷⁰ and Calvin affirmed that like humanity, angels were also created to reflect God's image:

Echoing Justin and Tertullian, Calvin . . . affirms that God is Father to both humanity and angels through Christocentric filiation [*Institutes*, 2:14:5, 488; 3:20:40, 903]. . . . A doctrine of the *imago Dei* [image of God] that includes the angelic realm grounds Christian angelology, as it should, within the doctrine of the Trinity. For, when the Church proclaims that the 'one God' has created 'all that is seen and unseen,' she is affirming nothing less than a doctrine of angels, which is circumscribed within the Trinitarian structure and content of the Nicene Creed.⁷¹

Calvin also wrote that because the Son of God was "the common Head over angels and men . . . the dignity that had been conferred upon man belonged also to the angels. When we hear the angels called 'children of God' [**Psa. 82:6**] it would be inappropriate to deny that they were endowed with some quality resembling their Father."⁷²

Thus, the burden of proof is on those who claim that angels may only assume male forms: such a claim fails entirely to explain the assumption about guardian angels in **Acts 12:15**, and it fails to explain the dual male-female reflection of God's image in the humans that guardian angels may manifest themselves to resemble. The fact that the Early Church believed Peter's guardian angel looked and sounded like

⁶⁹ Justin Martyr (2nd century AD) describes angels in his "Dialogue with Trypho," in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), vol. 1, Dialogue with Trypho, paragraph 19ff.

⁷⁰ Tertullian (end 2nd-to-early 3rd century AD) describes angels in several of his compositions, including "Apology 22ff.," "On Idolatry chp. 5ff.," "Against Marcion chp. 8ff.," etc., in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), vol. 3.

⁷¹ Seng-Kong Tan, "An Ecumenical Doctrine of Angels and Its Practical Significance," *Theandros* 1 (2003/4): 2-3 and notes 12-13.

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:12:6, 471.

Peter, suggests that the Early Church believed that the guardian angel of Mary Magdalene or those of the other women disciples also had the ability to manifest themselves to look and sound like the women they were assigned to, and that these guardian angels could manifest themselves with corresponding female forms.

Zechariah's visions and angelic spirits carrying out Yahweh's will

Acts 12:15 (against the background of **Genesis 1:27**) is not the only biblical passage that suggests that angels may manifest themselves with female forms, alongside angels that manifest themselves with male forms. **Zechariah 5:9** is another passage containing another biblical example of angels manifesting themselves in female form. The prophet Zechariah was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai at the end of the sixth century B.C., when the Jewish exiles had been restored to the land of Israel after the 70-year Babylonian captivity. The first generation of Jewish exiles returned from the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem, after the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, authorized the Jews in 538 B.C. to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple, since Solomon's temple (the first temple) had been completely destroyed by the Babylonians in 587/6 B.C. Led by Zerubbabel, the Jewish community in Jerusalem began to rebuild the temple. The foundation of the temple was completed by the restored Jewish exiles in Jerusalem in 536 B.C. (**Ezra 3:8-10**). But due to external pressures and internal apathy in the Jewish community, the work on the temple was discontinued some time before 520 B.C., when God began to speak to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem through Haggai and Zechariah (**Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1**). Both Zechariah and Haggai prophetically encouraged Zerubbabel and the leaders of the people to keep building the temple.

Physical rebuilding and spiritual renewal in Jerusalem and the land

Zechariah's prophetic message concerned not only the physical rebuilding of the temple but also the *spiritual renewal* of the restored Jewish community in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel. The book of Zechariah is the longest of the Minor Prophets with 14 chapters.⁷³ To understand the place of **Zech 5:9's** mention of two female angels, we must observe the literary and rhetorical structure of the first part of the book of Zechariah. The first 6 chapters of the book of Zechariah, **Zechariah 1-6**, form a literary and rhetorical unit, consisting of eight night visions, which concern the Lord's judgment on the nations and the salvation and restoration of God's people in the land of Israel. The eight night visions of **Zechariah 1-6** alternate in theme between prophetic visions concerning the restoration of the people, of Jerusalem, of the temple, and of the land, on the one hand, and on the other hand, visions of God's judgment on the nations who had oppressed His people:

Zech. 1:7-17: Vision #1—**Restoration** of the people, Jerusalem, the land (Angelic man and horses among the myrtles)

Zech. 1:18-21: Vision #2—**Judgment** on the nations who scattered the people of Judah and Jerusalem (Four horns, Four craftsmen)

Zech. 2:1-13: Vision #3—**Restoration** of the people, of Jerusalem, of the land (Angelic man with a measuring line measuring Jerusalem)

Zech. 3:1-10: Vision #4—**Restoration** of the High Priest, of the temple, of the land, and of the people (Clean garments replace the filthy garments on the High Priest being accused by satan).

⁷³ R. Dillard, and T. Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 427-428.

Zech. 4:1-14: Vision #5—**Restoration** of the work on the temple under Zerubbabel (Golden lampstand and two olive trees; the Spirit empowering Zerubbabel to complete the temple)

Zech. 5:1-4: Vision #6—**Warning concerning Judgment** (Flying Scroll with the Ten Commandments inscribed on it, releasing a curse on everyone who sins)

Zech. 5:5-11: Vision #7—**Warning concerning Restoration** of the Land (The iniquity of the land—the woman in the basket—is removed to Babylonia by two winged women)

Zech. 6:1-8: Vision #8—**Judgment** on the nations of the north

As we keep in mind the literary and rhetorical structure of the eight night visions of **Zechariah 1-6** above, it becomes clear that restoration of the Jewish community to Jerusalem and the land of Israel involved the warning of the sixth night vision, **Zech. 5:1-4**, that the Lord would not tolerate people sinning and breaking His law in the restored communities of Jerusalem and the land, and that law-breaking would release the covenant curses on those who had sinned (**Zech. 5:3-4**). And it is in this context that the seventh night vision in **Zech. 5:5-11** shows the iniquity of the land as a woman in a basket being removed to Babylonia. It echoes the Lord's promise in the fourth night vision in **Zech. 3:9** "I will remove the sin of this land in a single day" referring to the process of healing and restoring the people and the land at that time, and ultimately to the sacrifice of the Messiah on the cross 550 years later, when Jesus literally provided atonement for the sins of all humanity and all the earth in one, single day (**Rom. 6:10; 1 Pet. 3:18**). Like the preceding vision of **5:1-4**, this vision in **5:5-11** reminds the restored Jewish community that the Lord is removing the iniquity of the land that caused their forefathers to go into the Babylonian exile, and as such the vision serves as a warning to the restored post-exilic Jewish community not to fall back into the sins of the past that brought on the judgment of the Babylonian exile.

Context matters: ruakh referring to Yahweh and His angelic agents

It is in this context, the context of the theme of the Lord removing the sin and iniquity of the land introduced in the fourth night vision in **Zech. 3:9** ("I will remove the sin of this land"), that we find the seventh night vision showing the process of the iniquity of the land—personified by a woman in a basket—being removed from the land of Israel to Babylonia by two stork-winged women. Who are these two stork-winged women? Some commentators have suggested that they represent evil beings like the woman representing iniquity in the basket. But evil beings would hardly be doing the work of the Lord in removing the iniquity of the land. And secondly, the Hebrew text of **Zech. 5:9** says that these two stork-winged women had the *ruakh*, "spirit, wind," in their wings. The following discourse analytical observation about the literary-rhetorical unit made up of the eight night visions in **Zechariah 1-6** suggests that the two stork-winged women were agents of God and were indeed angelic: whenever the Hebrew term *ruakh* (which may be translated "spirit," or "wind") is used outside of **Zech. 5:9**, in the night vision series of chapters 1-6, the term refers to either the Spirit of Yahweh or to angelic agents who proceed from His heavenly court:

Zechariah 1-6 Eight Night Visions—Distribution of Hebrew "Ruakh"

Zech. 2:6 and **6:5** both mention "the four *rukhot hashamayim* (literally "spirits of heaven"): We know that these are angelic spirits, because the second passage, **Zech. 6:5**, describes them as "the four spirits of heaven going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world." The fact that these agents go forth from standing in the presence of the Lord to do His will in **Zech 6:5** suggests that they are also the Lord's

angelic agents and servants who proceeded from His presence, and not simply the inanimate "four winds of heaven," in **Zech 2:6**. In **Zech 2:6** the Lord is telling His people that He has scattered them "like the four spirits of heaven" meaning that as the four spirits of heaven are sent out from heaven to go throughout the earth, so the Lord brought judgment on His people by scattering them throughout the earth:

Zech. 2:6—Hebrew literally "Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north," declares the LORD, "for like the four *rukhot* (spirits) of heaven I have scattered you," declares the LORD."

Zech. 4:6 (NIV)—So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my *ruakh* (Spirit),' says the LORD Almighty."

Zech. 5:9 (NIV)—Then I looked up—and there before me were two women, with the *ruakh* in their wings! They had wings like those of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between heaven and earth.

Zech. 6:5 (NIV)—The angel answered me, "These [chariots, **6:1-2**] are the four *rukhot* (spirits) of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world."

Zech. 6:8 (NIV)—Then he called to me, "Look, those going toward the north country have given my *ruakh* (Spirit) rest in the land of the north."

Agents of Yahweh in cleansing the land

The fact that outside of **Zech. 5:9**, the Hebrew term *ruakh* ("spirit," or "wind") is used in the night visions unit of **Zech. 1-6** to refer to either the Spirit of Yahweh or to angelic agents who proceed from His heavenly court, clearly suggests that the association of the Hebrew term *ruakh* with the two stork-winged women means that they too are angelic agents, like the other angelic agents mentioned in **Zech. 6:5** and **2:6** who proceeded from the heavenly court of Yahweh. And this is confirmed by the fact that these two stork-winged women are doing the will of Yahweh in removing the iniquity from the land of Israel in **Zech. 5:9-11**.

It is for reasons such as those outlined above that many Old Testament scholars have recognized that the two stork-winged women were spiritual agents of the Lord and not evil agents at all. Dr. Baruch Halpern says that through the agency of the two stork-winged women, "the iniquity of the land is dispatched to Mesopotamia."⁷⁴ And Dr. Eugene Merrill describes it as follows:

What they [the two women with stork-like wings] do is made possible by . . . 'wind in their wings.' Since that would be a normal expectation in flight, its mention here is significant. Doubtless there is a *double entendre* here for *ruakh* . . . means spirit as well as wind. The same spirit of God that empowered Zerubbabel in temple building (4:6) was now at work transporting wickedness to her destination.⁷⁵

Dr. David Petersen says of **Zech 5:9** "The two women are not pictured as flying, i.e., actively moving their wings. Rather they appear to soar on the wind, Yahweh's agency of movement. Yahweh could not touch the evil and sin-guilt, but he could provide the power for its removal."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ B. Halpern, "The Ritual Background of Zechariah's Temple Song," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978): 180.

⁷⁵ E. H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi—An Exegetical Commentary* (Biblical Studies Press, 2003), pp. 156-157.

⁷⁶ D. L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PN: Westminster Press, 1984), p. 259.

Angelic agents and biblical scholars seeing the evidence for them

Because the two stork-winged women are so clearly agents of Yahweh, many Old Testament scholars have identified them as angelic agents. Professor William P Brown, for example, says "The basket is moved by two other women, who are cast in the role of angelic beings that move between the earthly and heavenly realms."⁷⁷ German Old Testament scholar, Prof. Christian Jeremias, suggested that the two stork-winged women of **Zechariah 5:9** were comparable to the cherubim angels in **Ezekiel 1**, who bore the throne of Yahweh from the land of Israel to Babylonia.⁷⁸ Even the great, medieval rabbinic and biblical scholar, the Rambam (Maimonides, 1135-1204 AD), and his near contemporary rabbinic and biblical scholar, Rabbi David Kimhi (1160-1235), both identified the two stork-winged women as angels. In his commentary on Zechariah, David Kimhi says:

The Rav, our rabbi, Moses the son of Maimon [Maimonides], may his memory be blessed, has interpreted the two women [as] angels, whom he [Zechariah] saw in the likeness of women, as he [Zechariah] had seen them in the likeness of horses [**Zech 2:1-6**].⁷⁹

The bottom-line here is that the Bible does suggest that God's angels can manifest themselves not only in male forms, as is common in Scripture, but also in female forms, as is implicitly the case with regard to the issue of guardian angels in **Acts 12:15** and as is explicitly the case with the two stork-winged women of **Zechariah 5:9**. Again, we should not be uncomfortable with this thought, because angels reflect the image and glory of God reflected in us male and female humanity, whom they are assigned to serve, to help us advance God's kingdom and preach the gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit to all nations:

Heb. 1:14 "**1:14** Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

Objection 8: "No Scripture supports the idea that the Holy Spirit bestows healing mantles through His angels. Only the Holy Spirit heals, not angels."

These assertions are simply not true on several counts, when examined in the light of Scripture. There are three points that need to be made below: 1) The Holy Spirit manifesting God's presence and glory is attended by angels throughout the Bible; 2) Healing mantles do exist, and they are just another name for healing and miraculous gifts of the Spirit; and 3) Angels are indeed associated with healing in Scripture. First, throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Holy Spirit manifesting God's presence, power, and glory, is closely associated with angels attending the presence and glory of God. One has only to observe the cherubim angels that carry the glory of the Lord and the Lord's throne in **Ezekiel 1:5-23**, and **10:2-20**; **Psalm 18:9-10**; and again in **Rev. 4:6ff**. Ezekiel's cherubim are clearly similar in function to the seraphim angels associated with the Lord's glory in Isaiah's vision in **Isaiah 6:1-7**. Like the cherubim, the seraphim accompany God as He is enthroned in the worship of the temple in **Isaiah 6** and as His glory fills the temple. In the Hebrew Bible, the Lord is

⁷⁷ W. P. Brown, *Obadiah through Malachi* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1989), p. 155.

⁷⁸ Jeremias drew attention to the fact that like the cherubim in **Ezekiel 1**, the two stork-winged women of **Zech. 5:9-11** were partly human in form, they had wings, and they moved from Judah to Babylonia: C. Jeremias, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja* [The Night Visions of Zechariah] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), p. 198.

⁷⁹ A. McCaul, *Rabbi David Kimhi's Commentary upon the Prophecies of Zechariah Translated from the Hebrew* (London, 1837), p. 51.

repeatedly described as "He who is sitting (or 'who is enthroned') upon the cherubim" (**Ps 80:1; 99:1; 1 Sam 4:4**), which itself suggests that angels *always* attend the presence of the Lord, especially when He manifests His glory and power. So it is clear that angels attend the presence, power, and glory of the Lord, especially when His Spirit manifests His glory in worship, as happened in the temple in **Isaiah 6**.

The Angel of His presence and ten thousand angels accompanying the Holy Spirit from Sinai

Furthermore, in **Isaiah 63:9-10** the angel of the Lord, who led the Israelites through the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt, is called "the angel of His presence (*mal'akh panav*, literally "the angel of His face")" referring to the "Presence" and "Glory" of the Lord that Moses asked for and saw manifested in a Glory cloud in **Exodus 33:14-23** and **34:5-7**. And the "angel of His Presence" is then associated in the next verse, **Isaiah 63:10**, with "His Holy Spirit":

Isa 63:9-10 (NIV)

In all their distress he too was distressed,
and **the angel of his presence** saved them.
In his love and mercy he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them
all the days of old.
Yet they rebelled
and grieved **his Holy Spirit**.
So he turned and became their enemy
and he himself fought against them. [boldface and italics mine]

We know that "the angel of His presence" does not mean that just one angel or archangel or even the Holy Spirit's presence alone, led the Israelites through the wilderness. In fact, there were "thousands" of angels attending the presence of the God's Spirit leading the Israelites from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land, according to **Deuteronomy 33:2**:

Deut 33:2-3

The Lord came from Sinai
and revealed himself to Israel from Seir.
He appeared in splendor from Mount Paran,
And came forth with **ten thousand holy ones** (angels)⁸⁰.
With his right hand he gave a fiery law to them.
Surely he loves the people;
all your holy ones are in your power.
And they sit at your feet,
each receiving your words.

⁸⁰ Old Testament scholars are virtually unanimous about the fact that the term "holy ones" of **Deut. 33:2** refers to angels, because the Septuagint, the 3rd-to-2nd century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, translates the end of **33:2** as "on his right were his **angels** with him." Dunn and Rogerson, express the common interpretation of this passage: "In the OT the 'sons of God' and the '**holy ones**' . . . are the **angels** (see **Gen 6:2; Deut 33:1; Job 38:7**)," Dunn and Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary of the Bible* (Eerdmans, 2003), p. 379; F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman argued that Yahweh came from Sinai with His retinue of angels, "The Blessing of Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (1948): 198-199.

In his article on the place of angels in contemporary theology, Dr. Lawrence Osborn points out that while Scripture "attributes all events ultimately to God . . . it recognises that many of those events are mediated through creaturely causes and agents."⁸¹ And listen to the witness of other biblical scholars about the close association of the Holy Spirit and the angels when God manifests His power and presence:

Both an angel of the Lord/God and the Spirit of the Lord/God play thus similar roles; as God's divine agents in the Jewish Bible. . . . Likewise in Luke-Acts, the narrative role of the angel is sometimes presented as identical with that of the Holy Spirit. . . . The term angel(s) of God found in **Lk. 12.8, 9; 15.10; Acts 10.3; 27.23** (cf. **Lk. 4.10**) is also reminiscent of the Spirit of God in **Acts 2.17, 18**.⁸²

The use of this kind of language and imagery is an essential element in the way the Old Testament speaks of God. He can 'send' his **ruach [Spirit]**, his **angel**, or his **word**. . . . In all of these, it is God himself who is present. They are so to speak extensions of his own being, means of his touching upon the affairs of Israel.⁸³ [boldface emphasis mine]

The majority of [NT references to leading angels] . . . occur in the Book of Revelation . . . *enopion tou Theou* [before God, in the presence of God], i.e., as part of the divine manifestation and in execution of the divine will.⁸⁴

Healing mantles—don't leave the meetings without them

Secondly, healing mantles do exist, and they are just another name for the healing and miraculous gifts of the Spirit mentioned in **1 Corinthians 12:9-10**. Furthermore, passages like **Luke 24:49** and **2 Corinthians 12:9** actually speak of the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of Christ "mantling" and "canopying" God's people:

Luke 24:46-49— 24:46 and said to them, "Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and would rise from the dead on the third day, **24:47** and repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **24:48** You are witnesses of these things. **24:49** And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you have been **clothed** [Greek *enduo*, "to wear, to be clothed"] **with power** from on high." [boldface and italics mine]

2 Cor. 12:7-10— 12:7 Because of the extraordinary character of the revelations, therefore, so that I would not become arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to trouble me – so that I would not become arrogant. **12:8** I asked the Lord three times about this, that it would depart from me. **12:9** But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." So then, I will

⁸¹ Osborn, "Entertaining Angels: Their Place in Contemporary Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 288.

⁸² This quote is from study of the Spirit in Luke-Acts of Korean New Testament scholar, Dr. Ju Hur, *Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Burns & Oates, 2001), pp. 171-172.

⁸³ This quote is from the study on the Holy Spirit in the Bible by German Reformed theologian and biblical scholar, Professor A. I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, in the History of Christian Thought, and in Recent Theology* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983), p. 8.

⁸⁴ This quote is from the study of angels and archangels by German New Testament scholar, Dr. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-74], vol. 1, p. 87.

boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me [Greek *episkenose ep' eme* literally "**tabernacle upon me**" or "*pitch a tent over me*"]⁸⁵ . **12:10** Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. [boldface and italics mine]

Clothed with the Spirit, burning with fire

Old Testament scholar, Dr. Victor H. Matthews, compares the language of "being clothed with power" in **Luke 24:49** with similar descriptions of the Holy Spirit empowering leaders in the book of **Judges**.⁸⁶ The language of **Judges** describes the Spirit of the Lord (*ruakh Yahweh*) "coming upon" (Hebrew *hayah 'al* 'come to be upon') Othniel and Jephthah in **Judges 3:10** and **11:29**. The Spirit of the Lord is described as "clothing" Gideon in **Judges 6:34** (Hebrew literally "Then the Spirit of the Lord **clothed** [Hebrew *lavash*] Gideon")⁸⁷, and this passage is clearly the language Jesus had in mind when He spoke of heavenly power "clothing" the disciples. And finally, the Spirit of the Lord is described as "rushing upon" (Hebrew *tsalakh* "rush upon") Samson in **Judges 14:6, 19** and **15:14**; upon Saul so that he "prophesies" in **1 Sam. 10:6, 10**; upon David when Samuel anointed him with oil in **1 Sam. 16:13**. The interesting thing about the Hebrew verb *tsalakh* "rush upon" is that it is not only used to describe the Holy Spirit being poured out on individuals, but (I like this one) it is also used of **fire** rushing upon and consuming Israel in **Amos 5:6**—Hebrew "Seek the LORD and live, lest **He rush** (*tsalakh*) **like fire** upon the house of Joseph; it will consume, and Bethel will have no one to quench it." Sounds familiar doesn't it . . . Lakeland, Toronto, Pensacola, Argentina, etc. . . . You get the picture.

The language outlined above of the Holy Spirit "clothing" and "rushing" like fire upon God's people, shows that there are Holy Spirit "mantles" or giftings that God is wanting to clothe us with to get the job done of advancing His Kingdom and preaching the gospel with power to every remaining unreached people-group around the world!

The Holy Spirit can heal and strengthen through angels too

Thirdly and finally, angels are indeed associated with healing in Scripture, but as such, they are clearly extensions of, and agents of, the Spirit of the Lord, as Dr. A. I. C. Heron described them above.⁸⁸ **John 5:4** says that an angel of the Lord regularly imparted God's healing power to the sick through the water of the Pool of Bethesda. I am aware that this verse, describing the angel stirring the Pool of Bethesda, is a later

⁸⁵ Compare Dr. Marva J. Dawn's comment, "The verb translated 'dwell' in the NRSV rendition of **2 Corinthians 12:9** is actually *episkenoo* or 'to tabernacle'" (M. J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 41; Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 2, domains 85C-85E, pp. 729-733.

⁸⁶ V. H. Matthews, *Judges and Ruth: The New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 57.

⁸⁷ The same Hebrew verb, *lavash* "to clothe," describes the Spirit of God coming upon a prophet named Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest in **2 Chronicles 24:20**: Hebrew literally, "And the Spirit of God **clothed** (*lavshah*) Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. And he stood up before the people and said to them, "This is what God says. . . ."

⁸⁸ See above A. I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, in the History of Christian Thought, and in Recent Theology* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983), p. 8: "The use of this kind of language and imagery is an essential element in the way the Old Testament speaks of God. He can 'send' his **ruach** [Spirit], his **angel**, or his **word**. . . . In all of these, it is God himself who is present. They are so to speak extensions of his own being, means of his touching upon the affairs of Israel." [boldface mine]

2nd century AD addition to the original text of **John 5:1-18**.⁸⁹ However the description of the angel and the Pool in **John 5:4** was known to the early Church Fathers, Tatian⁹⁰ (110-180 AD) and Tertullian⁹¹ (165-225 AD), and was accepted by them without any question as part of the account of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda. This suggests that the early Church of the 2nd century AD assumed that angels could minister the healing power of the Holy Spirit, since they accepted the account of the angel healing the sick at the Pool of Bethesda, as part of the Gospel of John.

One could add to this the example of the angel of the Lord that appeared to the parents of Samson—Manoah and his wife—in **Judges 13:2-21**. Now Manoah's wife was barren. And when the angel of the Lord came to her in **Judges 13:3-5** and spoke the prophetic word over her that she would bear a son, though the text doesn't explicitly say it, it is clear that she was healed of her barrenness, because she became pregnant and later gave birth to Samson (**Jud 13:24**). We might also add the account of Daniel falling on his face with no strength left, when the angel appeared to him in **Daniel 10:17-19**. The angel didn't just give Daniel a motivational speech! The angel "touched" Daniel and through the prophetic word released the power of the Spirit on him, so that Daniel's strength recovered:

Daniel 10:17-19— 10:17 How, sir, am I able to speak with you? My strength is gone, and I am breathless." **10:18** Then the one who appeared to be a human being *touch*ed me again and *strengthened me*. **10:19** He said to me, "Don't be afraid, you who are valued. Peace be to you! Be strong! Be really strong!" When he spoke to me, I was strengthened. I said, "Sir, you may speak now, for *you have given me strength*." [boldface italics mine]

So it is clear from the evidence above that angels are closely associated with the Holy Spirit manifesting the Lord's presence and glory; it is clear that there are indeed healing mantles that the Spirit can release on God's people directly or through His angels as His agents; and it is clear that the angels can be used by God's Spirit to minister healing and strength. My advice to you dear readers: Next time the Spirit of the Lord prompts leaders to say that His angels are coming into a meeting to offer God's people healing mantles, *DON'T TURN THE LORD AND HIS ANGELS DOWN! RECEIVE WHATEVER JESUS IS OFFERING SO YOU CAN GIVE IT AWAY IN POWER EVANGELISM!*

Objection 9: "Todd Bentley teaching that believers can go up frequently in the Spirit to God's throne in heaven, is unbiblical and borders on New Age visualization."

Once again, nothing could be further from the truth in Scripture! Let's review some of the passages that Todd Bentley cites when he teaches about accessing the throne room of heaven. The fact is that when we look at the relevant passages, the

⁸⁹ M. W. G. Stibbe, *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), p. 193 and note 3.

⁹⁰ Michael Mees, "Die Heilung des Kranken von Bethesdateich aus Joh. 5.1-18 in frühchristlicher Sicht [The Healing of the Sick Man of the Pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-18 in Early Christian Perspective]," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 696-708; J. H. Hill, *The Earliest Life of Christ: The Diatessaron of Tatian* (Gorgias Press, 2001), p. 90, 22:12 "For the angel went down at fixed seasons into the place of bathing, and moved the water."

⁹¹ Mees, "Heilung," 696-708; Tertullian, "On Baptism," in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), vol. 3, chapter 5: "If it seems a novelty for an angel to be present in waters, an example of what was to come to pass has forerun. An angel, by his intervention, was wont to stir the pool at Bethesda. They who were complaining of ill-health . . . after his washing, ceased to complain."

New Testament couldn't be clearer about a principle than this one that through Christ and His blood we have access *now* to God's throne in heaven (**Heb 4:16; 10:19** compared with **8:5, 9:11-12, 24**). As in many other aspects of the faith, Jesus modeled for us approaching Father God's throne in heaven, while Jesus was still on earth. In **John 3:12-13** Jesus told Nicodemus that He ascended into heaven, even before His post-resurrection ascension:

John 3:12-13—3:12 If I have told you people about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?
3:13 No one has ***ascended into heaven*** except the one who descended from heaven—***the Son of Man***. [boldface and italics mine]

Jesus in heaven and on earth at the same time

Clearly, Jesus is saying he "had ascended to heaven" as of the time of his dialogue with Nicodemus in **John 3**. But this "ascending to heaven" happened long before Jesus' post-resurrection ascension. This makes it clear that before his post-resurrection, Jesus was ascending in the Spirit to heaven, from where He received revelation from God the Father. New Testament scholars J. L. Martyn and C. L. Lloyd pointed out that the language of **John 3:13** portrays Jesus as "not consistently located on earth":

Jesus is portrayed conversing with Nicodemus on earth; yet he speaks at this point as though he had already ascended to heaven. In light of these references it is clear that John's Son of Man is not consistently located on earth.⁹²

And 18th century Swiss New Testament scholar, Dr. F. L. Godet, paraphrased what Jesus was trying to say in **John 3:13** as follows: "No one has entered into communion with God and possesses thereby an intuitive knowledge of divine things, in order to reveal them to others, *except He to whom heaven was opened and who dwells there at this very moment.*"⁹³ [emphasis mine]

Jesus saw the Father in the heavenly throne room

Indeed, when Jesus spoke of how his healing miracles came out of His dependence on and His communion with God the Father, He said in **John 5:19** that while on earth, He "saw" (Greek *blepein* "to see") what His Father was doing. Certainly Jesus "seeing" what His Father was doing happened, at least partly, in heavenly throne-room visions, in which Jesus ascended in the Spirit to heaven, long before His post-resurrection bodily ascension:

John 5:19-20— 5:19 So Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he ***sees*** the ***Father doing***. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. **5:20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does, and will show him greater deeds than these, so that you will be amazed."
 [boldface and italics mine]

⁹²J. L. Martyn and C. L. Lloyd, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2003), p. 135; also compare A. Hovey's comment on **John 3:13** "The Son of man, though now on earth, is at the same time in heaven" (A. Hovey, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* [American Baptist Publication Society, 1885], p. 99).

⁹³F. L. Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), p. 388.
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John R. Rice drew this conclusion from **John 5:19** and its thematic relationship to **John 3:13** and **1:18**:

In **John 5:19** Jesus said, 'The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.' On the earth, then, God's Son, the Lord Jesus, share God's omnipotence, God's omniscience, except as he chose to empty himself, and to limit self to be a model man. . . . So 'the Son of man' was 'in heaven' while on earth. He was 'in the bosom of the Father' [**John 1:18**] while in a peasant home in Nazareth, or walking the dusty roads of Judaea, or preaching in the Temple in Jerusalem (**3:13** and **1:18**).⁹⁴

Jesus is our model in seeing and entering the kingdom of heaven

Jesus was presenting Himself to Nicodemus in **John 3** as the way, by faith in Him, of "seeing" (**3:3**) and "entering" (**3:5**) the Kingdom of God, so that the same access to heaven that Jesus had was to be ours as His disciples. After all, Jesus said in **John 14:12** that He was to be our model and that we were to do the same miraculous works He did: **John 14:12**-- "**14:12** I tell you the solemn truth, *the person who believes in me will perform the miraculous*⁹⁵ *deeds that I am doing.*" Evangelical New Testament scholar, Dr. J. J. Kanagaraj, describes this extension of the heavenly access that Jesus mentioned in **John 3:13** to His disciples, as suggested by **John 3:3, 5**:

We can reasonably conclude that 'seeing' and 'entering' the kingdom of God [**John 3:3, 5**] means seeing and entering the heavenly realm by faith in and through the Son of Man, to see God as king and to experience the heavenly realities, including eternal life. Thus for John a vision of God's kingly glory and *participation in the heavenly world . . . is possible here on earth for those who are born of the Spirit by believing in Jesus.*⁹⁶ [emphasis mine]

We are already there seated in Christ in the heavenly realms

According to **Ephesians 2:6** we are already seated in Christ in heaven:

Eph. 2:5-6— 2:5 even though we were dead in transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ – by grace you are saved!– **2:6** and he raised us up with him and ***seated us with him in the heavenly realms*** in Christ Jesus. [boldface and italics mine]

⁹⁴ J. R. Rice, *The Son of God: A Verse-by-verse Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (Sword of the Lord, 1976), p. 75.

⁹⁵ New Testament scholars widely recognize that the Greek term, *erga* "works," when referring to Jesus and God the Father in the Gospel of John, denote miraculous works and are closely related to the *semeia*, "signs," of Jesus. So, for example, the healing of the man born blind in John 9 is referred to as "*the works of God (ta erga tou Theou)*" in John 9:3 and as one of "*such signs (toiauta semeia)*" in John 9:16 ("The deeds of God and Jesus, specifically miracles" BDAG, p. 390; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord* [London: Macmillan, 1856], p. 6; K. H. Rengstorf, "*semeion*," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, pp. 247-248).

⁹⁶ J. J. Kanagaraj, *Mysticism in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background* (JSNT Supplements, no. 158; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 203; also see Yale University biblical scholar Dr. Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972), pp. 52-53.

Ephesians 2:6 makes it clear that through our being one in Spirit with the Lord (**1 Cor. 6:17**), there is a part of our spirits and souls that is already up in the throne room of heaven, seated with Christ there! We were made for the throne-room, as **Ephesians 2:6** suggests. The fourth century AD Church Father, St. John Chrysostom, said "[Christ] opened the heavens; of foes he made friends; He introduced them into heaven; He seated our nature on the right hand of the throne; he gave us countless other good things."⁹⁷

Hebrews: entering the heavenly sanctuary and approaching the throne

We have to also reckon with the fact that the book of **Hebrews** has a significant theological theme running through much of the book, that by His own blood Christ made access for us into the heavenly sanctuary (**Heb. 4:14-15; 9:11-12, 24** and cf. **8:5; 10:19**) and that we are to "confidently approach the throne of grace" (**Heb. 4:16**) and we are to "have confidence to enter the [heavenly]⁹⁸ sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" (**Heb. 10:19**). German New Testament scholar, Professor Helmut Traub connected the theme in **John 3:13** of Jesus ascending to heaven while He was on earth, to the similar theme in the book of **Hebrews**:

In **John 3:13** . . . the idea of descending and ascending, which is hinted at in **Eph. 4:9**, finds radical formulation. Only he who has come down from heaven can mount up to heaven. . . . The incarnation does not interrupt fellowship with the Father; heaven . . . is open above the Son of Man, [**John**] **1:51**. This opening of heaven, which denotes Christ's redemptive work, is seen by the disciples in the form of the *anabainein* [ascending] and the *katabainein* [descending] of angels, which reflects this work. . . . Heaven is where the continuity of existence is maintained for the Son of Man and for those who belong to Him. . . .

Hebrews, too, contains similar expressions resting on the thought of a heavenly journey. In these are combined two theological assertions, first, Christ's exaltation to the right hand of majesty *en tois ouranois* [in the heavenlies] (**8:1**, cf. **1:3** *en hupselois* [in high places]), and secondly, the fulfillment of the high-priestly task of Jesus in the fact that, having gone through heaven (*dieleluthota tous ouranous* [having passed through the heavens] **4:14**), He has there become *hupseloteros ton ouranon* [exalted above the heavens] (**7:26**). The *skene* [tabernacle] of **9:11** is also to be understood as heaven (the heavenly tent). It is indeed the sanctuary through which (*dia*) He has passed *eis ta hagia* [into the most holy place]. **Hebrews** can also use heaven for this chief sanctuary, the holy of holies: *eis auton ton ouranon* [into heaven itself] (sing.), **9:24**. . . . *Hoi ouranoi* [The heavens] are equated with *skene* [the tabernacle]. . . . They are the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. . . . They are conceived of as filled with the liturgical ministries of angels.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Chrysostom as quoted by Theodoret, Dialogue II "The Unconfounded," in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, P. Schaff, H. Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 3, Theodoret, Dialogue II, "The Unconfounded."

⁹⁸ The heavenly sanctuary is clearly what **Heb. 10:19** is talking about, as **Heb. 9:11** and **9:24** demonstrate.

⁹⁹ H. Traub, in Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, pp. 526-527.

And Professor Michaelis said the following about the same theme in **Hebrews**:

[Concerning] the Way into the Sanctuary in **Hebrews 9:8; 10:20** . . . The gift of Jesus, namely, to have *granted us the right of free access into the sanctuary*, is depicted . . . under the . . . metaphor of the opening of a new and living way. . . . Of us [it is] true that we have access to the sanctuary *dia tes sarkos autou* [through His body].¹⁰⁰ [emphasis mine]

Chrysostom and Augustine: Mounting up to heaven to see things as God sees them

Writing about this theme in the book of **Hebrews**, St John Chrysostom urged his readers to "mount up" to heaven like Paul did in **2 Cor. 12:2-6**:

Let us then become heaven, let us mount up to that height, and so we shall see men differing nothing from ants. I do not speak of the poor only, nor the many, but even if there be a general there, even if the emperor be there, we shall not distinguish the emperor, nor the private person. We shall not know what is gold, or what is silver, or what is silken or purple raiment: we shall see all things as if they were flies, if we be seated in that height. There is no tumult there, no disturbance, nor clamor.

And how is it possible (one says) for him who walks on the earth, to be raised up to that height? I do not tell it thee in words, but I show thee in fact those who have attained to that height. Who then are they?

I mean such as Paul, who being on earth, spent their lives in heaven. But why do I say "in heaven"? They were higher than the Heaven, yea than the other heaven, and mounted up to God Himself. For, "who" (he says) "shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (**Rom. viii. 35.**) And again, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (**2 Cor. iv. 18.**) Seest thou that he did not even see the things here? But to show thee that he was higher than the heavens, hear him saying himself, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ." (**Rom. viii. 38, Rom. viii. 39.**)¹⁰¹

Like Chrysostom, St. Augustine (early 5th century AD), one of Western Christianity's leading theologians, also wrote in his commentary on **Psalm 42**¹⁰² about the believer mounting up to heaven in the Spirit. Church historian, Dr. Bernard McGinn describes Augustine's view of the soul mounting up to heaven: "In his commentary on Psalm 41 [English Bible **Psalm 42**], a favorite mystical Psalm, Augustine employs the image of the deer thirsting for water to construct a mini-treatise on mystical desire [for God]. He begins with vision. We seek God in order to 'see, if possible, something of him.' But that seeing is not external vision; it is first interior, moving within, and then transcendent, moving above. As Augustine begins to

¹⁰⁰ W. Michaelis, in Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, pp. 75-77.

¹⁰¹ Chrysostom, Hebrews Homily XVI, in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, P. Schaff, H. Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 14, Homily on Hebrews XVI, verse 8.

¹⁰² "Psalm 41" in Augustine's commentaries on the Psalms, because Augustine was following the numbering of the Septuagint, the 3rd-to-2nd century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible: in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, P. Schaff, H. Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 8, "On the Psalms," Psalm 41, 8-10.

interpret the movement above revealed in the Psalm, the inner senses of hearing, smell, and touch emerge ever more strongly. . . . Describing how the soul ascends from the tabernacle of the church to the heavenly house of God (Ps. 41:4 [English Bible **Ps. 42:4**]), he states, 'The soul . . . is led to the house of God by following a certain sweetness, an indescribable interior hidden pleasure. It is as if a musical instrument sweetly sounded from the house of God, and while walking in the tabernacle she [the soul of the believer] heard the interior sound, and led by its sweetness, followed it.'"¹⁰³

Which part of 'approaching' and 'entering' do we not understand?!

So when **Hebrews 4:16** urges us to "approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help" (**Heb. 4:16**), and **Hebrews 10:19** says that we should "have confidence to enter the [heavenly]¹⁰⁴ sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" (**Heb. 10:19**), which part of "approaching" and "entering" the heavenly throne room do we not understand?! Why can't we ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to readily see the heavenly throne room with our spiritual eyes--or our mind's-eye? As Todd Bentley has pointed out, Paul calls the mind's-eye "the eyes of the heart" (KJV "eyes of the understanding") in **Eph. 1:18**.¹⁰⁵ The mind's eye is also referred to in **Daniel 7:1-2** as the place where the prophet Daniel received visions from the Lord: "visions passed through *his head*" (Aramaic *resh* "head" **Daniel 7:1**). If we have got spiritual eyes, we should use them (!) to do what God wants us to do, by asking the Holy Spirit to help us see and enter the heavenly sanctuary so that we can approach His throne of grace, receive His power and His plans for us to advance His Kingdom and the gospel on earth.

Our minds should be seeking things up in the throne room

Add to these passages, **Colossians 3:1-2**'s command to "set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." St John Chrysostom said of this passage, "Whither hath [Christ] led our minds aloft! How hath he filled them with mighty aspiration! . . . 'Seated on the right hand of God,' [**Col. 3:1**] from that point he was preparing [our minds] henceforward to see the earth."¹⁰⁶

So **Colossians 3:1-2** commands us to be thinking about heaven all the time, and **Hebrews 4:16** and **10:19** actually urge us to enter heaven under the leading of the Spirit to receive God's help.

¹⁰³ B. McGinn, "The Language of Inner Experience in Christian Mysticism," in E. Dreyer and M. S. Burrows, *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 140.

¹⁰⁴ The heavenly sanctuary is clearly what **Heb. 10:19** is talking about, as **Heb. 9:11** and **9:24** clearly demonstrate.

¹⁰⁵ The Church Father and theologian, **Origen of Alexandria, Egypt**, c. 228 AD, known as the "Father of Christian Theology," in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* said that "the prophets . . . saw in (their) mind and heard with the ears of the inner man" (cited by J. Behm, in G. Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-74], vol. 4, p. 966, n. 14); **St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, North Africa**, c. 419 AD, in his treatise *On the Trinity* (XI. 4. 7; A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *The AntiNicene Fathers* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1885-1887], vol. 3) says that man possesses not only a "bodily eye" but an "eye of the mind" or "mind's-eye" that perceives "spiritual substance" or spiritual realities.

¹⁰⁶ Chrysostom, Colossians Homily VII, in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, P. Schaff, H. Wace, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 13, Homily on Colossians, chap. iii, verse 1.

When He was on earth, Jesus focused on heaven and abided in the throne room of His Father. And we are to do the same according to **Hebrews 4:16, 10:19** and **Colossians 3:1-2**. Similarly, as Chrysostom said, Paul urges believers in **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** to pay attention to the unseen reality of heaven: "Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory. . . . So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (**2 Cor. 4:17-18**).

New Age? No way! Biblical practice leads to good fruit again

These clear statements from Scripture are a far cry from the false charges that Todd Bentley teaching believers to enter the heavenly throne room, through the empowering and help of the Holy Spirit, represents "New Age notions." No, this is *not* "New Age." It is *biblical* and stands in a profound line of historic Christian tradition on obeying God's Word as it urges us to enter into the heavenly throne room and to abide there in Father God's presence, like Jesus did. The throne room is our eternal destiny!

My wife and I have repeatedly seen God work miracles and bring financial breakthroughs, and breakthroughs in healing, witnessing to the lost, and other types of breakthroughs in prayer, when I have asked Holy Spirit to let me come into the heavenly throne room of God. Like Todd Bentley has taught and written about his throne room experiences, Jesus has never said "no" to me, when I have asked to enter the heavenly throne room in the Holy Spirit "to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need" (**NIV Heb. 4:16**). But Jesus takes me in visions that I see with my mind's-eye into the throne room, where I worship Father God with the rest of heaven, and then when Jesus invites me, I lay my pressing issues out before Father God on the altar, releasing all my own control and worries to Him, submitting myself to His will, and asking Him for His judgment and word over the situation I am praying about. Miracles and breakthroughs always follow. For example, over the past seven months, my wife and I have at times not had enough income to cover our rent (we rent an apartment in the third most expensive real estate market in the USA, where the cost of living is very high, while we've been paying a parental portion of our son's college tuition scholarship program). For months now, Father God has told me in the heavenly throne room that His angels would bring in enough funds to cover our rent and that I should simply praise Him in advance for it. He told me to speak His word over our circumstances daily and praise Him in advance that we would have every bit of what we needed from His hand and an abundance beyond it (**Eph. 3:20**). And then I would watch as He dispatched his angels from the throne room to carry out His word. For each and every one of the past seven months, as I have prayed the way I was told to by Father God, we have received unexpected checks in the mail or gifts or other unexpected income that totally surprised us, but all of which were granted to my family in prayer sessions when Jesus allowed me to come before Father's throne of grace in heaven.

The Scriptures are clear on this issue, and from my own experience, the fruit of these experiences has been very good and has only drawn me closer to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Again, there were no subsequent urges to get my focus off of Jesus, to sacrifice a goat to strange gods, or to stand in airports and hand out Hindu tracts. . . . My heart is still a sanctuary for Jesus and His Kingdom cause alone.

Objection 10: "Todd Bentley is a false prophet, because he teaches things I cannot find in Scripture."

Two points need to be made here: First, as has been demonstrated above, the fact that the so-called "Bible experts," critics, and concerned leaders, cannot find in Scripture what Todd Bentley and the leaders of the Lakeland outpouring have been

teaching and modeling, is more a testimony to the fact that the critics (as well as the rest of us) need to revisit the Scriptures and study the relevant passages more carefully, bind the enemy from interfering with our thinking (**James 4:7-8**; compare Peter's thoughts being influenced by the enemy in **Matt. 16:22-23**), and consciously ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth according to Jesus' promise in **John 16:13-15**. I mentioned above that we desperately need a new Spirit-led academic and ministry training standard along these lines in our seminaries, Christian colleges and universities and Bible schools.

Keeping the main thing, the main thing, and repenting of functional atheism

What Todd Bentley and the others are teaching ***certainly is*** in Scripture and is vitally connected to believers being able to glorify Jesus, to advance God's Kingdom, and to preach the gospel with healing power in the coming years! Indeed the Lord told Todd Bentley, and I believe it is clearly biblical: "Todd, if you can get people to believe in the realities of the spiritual realm (the manifestation of heaven touching earth—the prophetic word, angels, dreams, and people being healed and set free), then I will release more of My power. . . . My people don't have trouble believing in Me, but when you mention that an angel showed up they quickly get into unbelief."¹⁰⁷ We, the Body of Christ, need to repent of our being *functional atheists*—acting as if the supernatural realm, that Scripture clearly portrays, is really not functionally real for us. Meanwhile, God is waiting for us to come fully into our spiritual inheritance in Christ, so that He can use us fully to preach the gospel with power to the last unreached nations and people groups on earth, which will then usher in the second coming of His Son according to **Matthew 24:14**!

It is the fruit that matters most in distinguishing true and false prophets

The Bible has much to say about false teachers and false prophets. The New Testament's statements about false teachers and leaders find their origin in the Old Testament's teaching about false prophets. Jesus said that the last days would be filled with persecution of believers and betrayal among believers, and that as the gospel reaches every nation signaling the end, "many false prophets will appear and deceive many people" (**Matt. 24:11**):

Matt. 24:9-14 (NIV) "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time ***many*** will ***turn away from the faith*** and will ***betray*** and ***hate*** each other, and ***many false prophets will appear and deceive many people***. Because of the ***increase of wickedness***, the ***love of most will grow cold***, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. [boldface and italics mine]

Clearly we will need the Holy Spirit's help to have ***thick skin and a gentle heart*** in these last days!

What we will see in the biblical passages below is that many of these false prophets and teachers will ***begin*** as ***true prophets and leaders***, who will not repent but who will ***become*** false prophets and leaders, as they come to use their gifts and the anointing of God's Spirit to serve themselves rather than the Lord.

¹⁰⁷ Bentley, *The Reality of the Supernatural World*, p. 47.

Whole books have been written about the rise of false prophets in the church today, but some of these books give entirely false criteria for discerning false prophets from true prophets, and they fail to identify clear biblical criteria found in the Old and New Testaments for discerning false prophets and false leaders.

Jesus' criterion for discerning false prophets and false teachers

The clear criterion that Jesus gives us in **Matt. 7:15-23** is the *fruit* of a prophet's heart and lifestyle. In this passage, Jesus is drawing on the Old Testament metaphor of fruit found in passages like **Jeremiah 17:9-10**—(translating the Hebrew directly) "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the **heart** and examine the **mind**, to reward a man according to **his ways**, according to **fruit of his practices**." [boldface and italics mine] The metaphor of fruit in this passage refers to good and bad *practices—lifestyle issues*—that proceed from a person's *heart*. And in **Matt. 7:15-23** below, Jesus uses the same metaphor of fruit to refer to the godly or godless *lifestyle* and *character* of a prophet. Prophets and teachers can say "the right things" and have wildly anointed ministry, but it is their *character* and their *lifestyle* that will show whether they are true or false. This criterion is also echoed in many biblical passages that we will look at below:

Matt. 7:15-23 (NIV) Watch out for ***false prophets***. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ***By their fruit you will recognize them***. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A ***good tree cannot bear bad fruit***, and a ***bad tree cannot bear good fruit***. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ***Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only 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 drive out demons and perform many miracles?'*** Then I will tell them plainly, ***'I never knew you***. Away from me, you ***evildoers!*** [boldface and italics mine]

Jesus' words in **Matthew 7:15-23** make it clear that operating under the anointing of God's Spirit and operating in gifts like prophecy, healing, miracles, and teaching do not, by themselves, constitute the good fruit that God is looking for. Rather, ***pleasing God*** ("he who does the will of my Father"), ***walking in intimate relationship with Him*** (contrast "I never knew you"), and ***turning away from evil*** (contrast "Away from me, you evildoers"), as one walks in the anointing of God's Spirit and does the works of Jesus—these are what constitute bearing the ***good fruit*** that God is looking for. John the Baptist's message reminds us that producing *good fruit* always involves *repentance* and turning away from evil:

Matt. 3:8-10 (NIV) ***Produce fruit in keeping with repentance***. And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ***ax is already at the root of the trees***, and ***every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire***. [boldface and italics mine]

So if you or I see an evangelist, a healer, a pastor, an apostle or a prophet

operating in true anointing and gifting, but who regularly bears bad fruit in their character and lifestyle and who are unwilling to repent and turn from their evil, especially when they have been lovingly confronted, we should *run*—not walk—away from that leader. God will lay the ax to the root of the tree in that leader's life and ministry: as in the case of Samson, a leader who was wildly anointed, but whose lifestyle was evil, the anointing may continue for a while so that God can keep ministering to His people with His power even through a corrupt leader like Samson. But eventually God will withdraw His anointing, as He did from Samson in **Judges 16:20**.

Characteristics of false prophets in the OT: Deuteronomy 13 and 18

The Old Testament gives criteria for God's people to distinguish false prophets in **Deuteronomy 13:1-5** and **18:14-22**. We know from **Deuteronomy 13:1-2** that false prophets may announce a miraculous sign or wonder—and it may take place—to entice God's people to follow other gods. But **Deut. 18:22** makes it clear that false prophets will be *less accurate* in their prophetic predictions than a true prophet of the Lord:

Deut. 18:22 (NIV) If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

One must be careful how this criterion is applied to discern false prophets, because there are many cases in Scripture where true prophets of God spoke prophetic words that were not fulfilled for *other reasons than that they were false prophets*. Jonah's prophetic word, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned" (**Jonah 3:4**), did not come true, because Nineveh repented. Nathan's inaccurate word encouraging King David to build the temple,¹⁰⁸ "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you" (**2 Sam. 7:3**), was later corrected by God in **2 Sam. 7:4ff**.¹⁰⁹ David's own prophetic word about Solomon, "I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side" (**1 Chron. 22:9**), was ultimately not fulfilled. Because of Solomon's sins against the Lord, **1 Kings 11:14-25** makes it clear that the Lord raised up enemies against Solomon on several sides. Elisha was led by God in **2 Kings 8:10** to give an inaccurate word¹¹⁰ to Hazael to report to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, that the king would recover from illness, so that God could tell Hazael through Elisha that he would be the next king of Aram. Huldah's prophecy in **2 Kings 22:20** (and **2 Chronicles 34:28**) that King Josiah would "be buried in peace" did not come true: Josiah died and was buried in war not in peace.¹¹¹ Scholars recognize that the text of Chronicles emphasizes in **2 Chronicles 35:22** that Josiah died an early

¹⁰⁸ The language used in the passage is more than mere court language or a polite formality before the king, as shown by K. N. Jung, "Court Etiquette in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1979), pp. 24-31; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 11; Waco: Word, 1989), p. 117.

¹⁰⁹ E Kutsch, "Die Dynastie von Gottes Gnaden. Probleme der Nathanweissagung [The Dynasty of God's Grace: Problems with the Prophecy of Nathan]," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 (1961), p. 138, n. 1.

¹¹⁰ M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (The Anchor Bible, vol. 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 90.

¹¹¹ R. Althann, "Josiah," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 1017; C. T. Begg, "The Death of Josiah in Chronicles: Another View," *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987), pp. 1-8; A. Malamat, "Josiah's Bid for Armageddon: The Background of the Judean-Egyptian Encounter in 609 B.C.," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 5 (1973), pp. 267-280; H. G. M. Williamson, "The Death of Josiah and the Continuing Development of the Deuteronomistic History," *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982), pp. 242-248.

violent death¹¹²—the text clearly asserts that Josiah involved himself in a war God never told him to fight. Josiah “would not listen to what Neco [king of Egypt] had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo” (**2 Chron. 35:22**).

In such examples, we are dealing, in part, with the kind of contingency in prophecy that Jeremiah prophesies about in **Jeremiah 18:7-10**:

Jer. 18:7-10 (NIV) If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and ***if that nation I warned repents of its evil***, then ***I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned***. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and ***if it does evil in my sight*** and does not obey me, then ***I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it***. [boldface and italics mine]

Assessing good vs. bad character even more than prophetic accuracy

So if the 100% fulfillment of a prophetic word is not a black-and-white biblical criterion for discerning true prophets from false prophets, what criterion does Scripture leave us? The leading criterion that Scripture gives us to discern false prophets is, as we saw above, the *good or bad character* of the prophet.

According to **Deut. 13:1-3** and **18:20**, even when they accurately prophesy a sign and a wonder, false prophets lead God's people away from loving and serving the Lord. They cause God's people to disobey the Lord, and encourage God's people to worship other gods (not just demonic ‘gods’ but also self, other people, power, greed, etc.):

Deut. 13:1-3 (NIV) If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and ***he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them,"*** you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. [boldface and italics mine]

Deut. 18:20 (NIV) But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or ***a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.*** [boldface and italics mine]

A false prophet can try to act like a true prophet, but if the effect of their words and teaching leads people away from putting the Lord first in everything (**Matt. 6:33; Col. 3:23-24**), and away from loving and serving the Lord, to disobeying the Lord, then that prophet is a false prophet. The effect of a false prophet's words may be subtle. If the words of a prophet even subtly lead people not to depend on the Lord or lead them to rely on other sources of security rather than on the Lord—whether on the prophet himself or herself, or on human systems, on money, on man, on biblically false ideas or ways of thinking that are apart from the Lord—then that prophet is a false prophet.

¹¹² See references in the previous note; the following passages make it very clear that in the language and metaphors of the Old Testament dying and being buried in peace do *not* mean dying in warfare and then being buried afterward: **Jer. 34:4-5; 1 Kings 22:27-28; 2 Chron 18:26-27; 19:1; cf. Gen. 15:15; Ps. 4:8.**

Bad character will mark false prophets more than anything else

Furthermore, the Hebrew of **Deuteronomy 18:20** shows that false prophets will display *bad character*. They will have *significant negative issues* in their *character and lifestyle*. **Deuteronomy 18:20** echoes what Jesus says in **Matt 7:15ff**, that false prophets *bear bad fruit*. The Hebrew of **Deuteronomy 18:20** literally says, "But the prophet *who acts presumptuously* in speaking¹¹³ a word in my name. . . ." The Hebrew verb in the passage, *yazid*, means "to act proudly, presumptuously, rebelliously"¹¹⁴ and it gives us a clear indication of the heart and character of a false prophet. It is the same verb used in **Deuteronomy 1:43** of the Israelites *not listening* to the Lord's command at Kadesh but *rebellious* against His warning :

Deut. 1:43 (NIV) So I told you, but ***you would not listen***. ***You rebelled*** (*tazidu*) against the Lord's command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. [boldface and italics mine]

A noun ("arrogance, insolence") from the same root as the verb is used in **Proverbs 13:10** of *pride that does not humble itself and take advice from others*. The same verb and a noun ("insolence, arrogance") from the same root as the verb are used in **Deuteronomy 17:12-13** of a person *not listening to or obeying priests and judges*. The verb is used in **Nehemiah 9:16, 29** of the Israelites in the wilderness becoming *stiff-necked and refusing to listen to the Lord through Moses, not obeying the Lord's commands, and failing to remember all that He had done* for them. An adjective ("arrogant, insolent") from the same root as the verb is used in **Isaiah 13:11** to describe those who are *haughty and ruthless*. In **Malachi 3:15** the adjective ("arrogant, insolent") is used of *evildoers who challenge God*. The same adjective ("arrogant, insolent") is used in **Psalms 86:14** of *ruthless people who show no regard for God* and who are attacking David.

The verb *yazid* in **Deuteronomy 18:20** gives us a good profile, then, of false prophets. False prophets will display an insolent, presumptuous, arrogant attitude. They will not humble themselves to be accountable to those God has made them accountable to or to listen to the advice of others. Their actions will either be subtly or overtly evil. They will show themselves to be unjust, self-serving, manipulative, deceptive, harsh, and greedy, as the following passages, which we'll look at below, demonstrate: **Num. 22-24** (Balaam); **1 Kings 13** (the old prophet from Bethel); **1 Kings 22** (Zedekiah the false prophet); **Jer. 23:10-11, 14**; **Ezek. 13:7, 10, 19, 22**; **Mic. 2:6-11; 3:5**.

1 Kings 13—true prophets should not let themselves become false prophets

The narrative in **1 Kings 13:18** about the old prophet from Bethel lying to the young prophet from Judah shows that true prophets can become false prophets. The old prophet from Bethel clearly had been a true prophet. **1 Kings 13:20** clearly says "the word of the Lord came to the old prophet," when God gave the old prophet a word of judgment concerning the young prophet from Judah. But the text clearly says that the old prophet lied to the younger prophet from Judah to get the latter to

¹¹³ For this rendering of the Hebrew preposition *l* + the infinitive construct, see B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 609, no. 31.

¹¹⁴ Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 267; see the occurrences of the the verb *zid* illustrating the presumptuousness, arrogance, and rebellion denoted by the verb in **Exo. 21:14; Deut. 1:43; 17:12-13; Jer. 50:29; Neh. 9:10, 16, 29**.

come home and eat with him:

1Kgs. 13:15-18 (NIV) So the [old] prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat." The man of God [from Judah] said, "I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. I have been told by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.'" The old prophet answered, "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.'" ***But he was lying to him.*** [boldface and italics mine]

The old prophet from Bethel seems to have been lonely and wanting fellowship with the younger prophet from Judah. The older prophet showed he had a self-serving attitude when he lied to the younger prophet to get him to come and eat with him. Worse yet, the older prophet's lying to the younger prophet clearly constitutes presumptuous rebellion against the word of the Lord to the young prophet from Judah. The older prophet clearly led the younger prophet to disobey the Lord's word. And this action clearly falls into the descriptions of false prophets found in **Deuteronomy 13** and **18**.

Thus, the text of **1 Kings 13** is showing the reader that a true prophet could become a false prophet, when he or she begins to operate out of wounds of the heart that lead to self-serving motives like those of the old prophet from Bethel. The old prophet's loneliness led to his self-serving lying to the younger prophet. And this brings up a very *important* point—if prophets and teachers do not deal with the wounds of their hearts, and let Jesus heal those inner wounds, the wounds of their hearts may provide the occasion for Satan to push them to walk the road of the false prophet. If they refuse to be accountable for their sins and weaknesses, and if they refuse to let the Lord heal their hearts, prophets and teachers will become self-serving, manipulative, and deceitful, even to the point of turning others away from the Lord, like the old prophet from Bethel turned the young prophet from Judah away from obeying the Lord.

Graham Cooke's description of false prophecy is very helpful:

False prophecy is deceptive. . . . Deception is a lifestyle issue. It does not arrive overnight. It is caused by a lack of real accountability. . . . False prophecy is deliberately speaking what others want to hear. It is given by manipulative people who are serving themselves not the Lord. False prophecy is used to gain control of people's lives; to bind people into churches and churches into networks; usually for reasons of personal gain and wealth.¹¹⁵

1 Kings 22—true prophets may give false words under controlling leaders

In **1 Kings 22** we read the account of the true prophet, Micaiah, son of Imlah, as he faces off with the 400 false prophets of Ahab's court. All the false prophets were prophesying that the Lord would give King Ahab victory against the Arameans at Ramoth Gilead in Transjordan, east of the Jordan River. At first, Micaiah, bows to the control and pressure of Ahab's messenger and actually gives *the same false prophetic word* that the 400 false prophets were giving to Ahab. It is actually *King Ahab*, not exactly a paragon of righteousness, who corrects Micaiah and tells him to

¹¹⁵ Graham Cooke, *Developing Your Prophetic Gifting* (Sovereign World, 1994), pp. 310-311.

give a true prophetic word from the Lord! (How is that for a slap in the face? . . . an evil leader tells you to speak a true word from the Lord!) And this leads to another very important point: this passage demonstrates that if they bow to ungodly pressure and control from leaders over them, *true prophets* can give *false prophetic words* or words that are tainted with error:

1 Kgs. 22:13-17 (NIV) The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. **Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably.**" But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me." When he arrived, the **king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."** The **king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd,** and the LORD said, "These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace." [boldface and italics mine]

Idols in the heart will guarantee a false word from the Lord every time

Ezekiel 14:2-4 also makes the point that true prophets of the Lord may give false prophetic words to people who hang on to idols in their heart that are not surrendered to the Lord. Prophets must repent of the fear of man and of being more concerned about public recognition than being right with the Lord. People seeking prophetic words must repent of any idols they have set up in their hearts. Otherwise, as **Ezekiel 14:2-4** makes clear, the Lord will let false prophetic words come to both the prophet and to the one seeking the prophetic word from the Lord:

Ezek. 14:2-4, 9 (translating the Hebrew directly)¹¹⁶—Then the word of the LORD came to me: (3) Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all? (4) Therefore speak to them and tell them, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When any Israelite **sets up idols in his heart** and puts the **stumbling block of his iniquity before his face** and then goes to a prophet, I the LORD Myself will be brought to answer him according to the multitude of his idols." . . . (9) "And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word [to those who have set up idols in their hearts], **I the LORD Myself have deceived¹¹⁷ that prophet,** and I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him from among my people Israel."

¹¹⁶ Many translations of the Hebrew in this passage are too periphrastic and interpretive to use here. See the KJV and NKJV, and the NET Bible all of which, for the most part, accurately translate the language of this passage.

¹¹⁷ I retain the meaning "deceive" for the Hebrew verb *pith* [*piel* of $\sqrt{\text{pth}}$] here in **Ezek. 14:9**, rather than the connotation "make a fool of," because certain occurrences of the verb in the Hebrew Bible clearly have the connotation "deceive" (**Exo. 22:16; Deut. 11:16; Jud. 14:15; 2 Sam. 3:25; 1 Kgs 22:20-22**) and the occurrence of the verb in **1 Kings 22:20-22** clearly shows that Yahweh intended to deceive king Ahab, through the agency of a "lying spirit" (**ruakh sheqer, 22:22**) because Ahab clearly had idols in his heart in place of being purely devoted to Yahweh.

1 Kings 22—false prophets will display harsh, arrogant, competitive, and self-serving character fruit

After he is rebuked by King Ahab, the true prophet, Micaiah, gives a true prophetic word to Ahab that the Lord would lead Ahab to his death at Ramoth Gilead and that the Lord had sent a "lying spirit" into the mouths of the 400 false prophets prophesying victory to the king. The false prophet, Zedekiah, is understandably not flattered by this prophetic word given by Micaiah. Zedekiah illustrates the bad fruit of a false prophet—*competition, out-of-control anger, arrogance, defiance, and harshness*—when he slaps Micaiah in the face:

1Kgs. 22:23-25 (NIV) "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you." ***Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the Spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked.*** Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room." [boldface and italics mine]

Below are a couple of more aspects of false prophets and false teachers that are important to keep in mind.

False prophets and teachers do not repent of sin, and they look the other way, instead of lovingly correcting, the sins of God's people

False prophets and teachers do not turn away from their own sins and they do not turn God's people away from their sins. **Jeremiah 23:14, 16-22** makes this clear:

Jer. 23:14, 16-22 (NIV) And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. ***They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness.*** They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah. . . . This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. ***They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The LORD says: You will have peace.'*** And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, ***'No harm will come to you.'*** But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly. I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. But ***if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.*** [boldface and italics mine]

Ezek. 13:10 (NIV) They ***lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace,*** and . . . , when a flimsy wall is built, they ***cover it with whitewash.*** [boldface and italics mine]

False prophets and teachers will focus on money, getting attention on themselves rather than the Lord, and will be self-serving

False prophets and teachers will have either an overt or subtle focus on money and materialism. Balaam, the quintessential false prophet in Scripture, certainly did. ***HEAR ME NOW: they will act like they love the Lord, but they will actually be more interested in what other people think, or be more interested in money, in power, in sex, or in control, than in loving the Lord more than anything else in their lives.*** Balaam's fruit was bad. He regularly cursed peoples with witchcraft (**Num. 24:1**), and he wanted to curse and undermine Israel for money (**Num. 31:16**; cf. **Deut. 23:5**). The text of Numbers 22 suggests that this is why the Lord got angry with him and opposed him, because he intended to do that which opposed the Lord's intention that he only bless Israel (**Num. 22: 22, 32**). Balaam would only get paid, and his trip to Moab would only make sense, if he got *paid* for cursing Israel (**Num. 22:7; 24:10-11; Deut 23:5**).

A personal painful learning experience—What I learned from failing to correct bad character early in mentoring relationships

As a seminary professor I often met students with very strong prophetic gifting. Two young men that I will call George and John stand out in my mind as painful reminders that pastors, prophets, evangelists, healers, and other leaders who do not deal with their sins and heart issues can quickly go astray from the path the Lord intends for them and become false prophets and false teachers. Both George and John were students of mine when I was associate professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Regent University School of Divinity in the latter 1990's, and both were highly gifted prophets and intercessors.

They both had been intercessors for my family and me and both had great prophetic authority from God. Both George and John would often know details of our lives and the spiritual warfare we were going through, before we would call and tell them to ask for prayer. John had tremendous insight and authority from God in spiritual warfare. Both had tremendous authority in personal prayer ministry, casting out demons and praying for inner healing of the wounds that held people bound to bitterness and demonic forces. God would answer both men's prayers and intercession in awesome ways, ways that reminded me, as an Old Testament professor, of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings.

At different times in the past when I taught at Regent University and when my wife Catherine and I were heading the University Prayer Network, both men had sought voluntarily to be under my leadership, mentoring, and spiritual covering, and I had asked them to minister alongside me on various occasions. Strangely enough, during the course of my relationship with them, both George and John started subtly exhibiting competitive, un-Christ-like behavior that I had allowed to continue too long before the Holy Spirit finally pressed me to say something to them. George started developing a critical attitude toward other students and eventually toward me. Because he could see in the Spirit (**2 Kings 6:17; 2 Sam. 24:17**), he was repulsed by the demons he saw on many other needy students, which he discerned with great accuracy, and he would say things like "I don't want to get near that person they're so full of demons and garbage!" John on the other hand had a habit of being verbally controlling and competitive in meetings with three or more people and in his teaching style. He would interrupt and cut off people and direct attention to himself through his verbal control. He was also very loose with his tongue when he was angry, cursing in

a way that is inappropriate for Christian leaders (**Eph. 4:29; 5:4**) and claiming that because Jesus was his friend, Jesus didn't mind his rough language.

Unfortunately, both men started going astray and getting deceived more and more by the enemy, when they resisted my efforts to correct them lovingly and to help them see personal issues they needed to deal with and heart issues they needed to let the Lord heal them from. As my wife and I prayed for each of these men, the Lord showed us that their issues stemmed from generational iniquity patterns in their parents, that they were now walking in, and from wounds and pains inflicted on them by their parents. On the separate occasions when I followed the Lord's direction to speak to each of these men about their un-Christ-like behavior, to urge them to repent, and to offer to pray with them through the heart issues that fed their un-Christ-like behavior, both men refused to do so.

In the end both men refused to be accountable, their reactions ranging from outbursts of anger to icy coolness and bitter complaining that they couldn't help themselves. Fear of man, deception, and living in denial were *huge* issues in both men's lives, and it took me and my wife some time to unravel ourselves from both men's deception and for us to hear from the Lord clearly on how to pray for them and how to confront them.

Both men lacked any real accountability to Christian community or to other leaders outside their own circle of people that they were teaching and mentoring. Their manipulative behavior made it clear that they did not want to be accountable to me or to any other spiritual leader. I heard later from several pastors in southeastern Virginia, where Regent University is located, that for the next several months one of these men had bounced from church to church, exploding at pastor after pastor, when he was confronted on his issues. When one spiritual leader would lovingly confront them on their issues, they would claim that the Lord told them that they were no longer to be accountable to that leader, and they would search for another leader who would overlook their sinful behavior. Both men would also try to use deception and flattery on occasion to avoid discussing the issues and sins I or other spiritual leaders confronted them with.

Both men developed inappropriate emotional attachments to other male and female prophets and intercessors, who gave them a sense of spiritual security and fulfillment. They looked for other prophetic people who would *need* them and their prophetic gifts and prayers. While there was never sexual misconduct in either man's life, which both men would not let themselves fall into, both let themselves become involved in codependent relationships with other prophetic intercessors that often involved more emotional intimacy than they had with their own wives. This was clearly wrong—Jesus meant it when He said, "So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (**Matt. 19:6**).

Our experience with both men was deeply painful for us. Sadly Catherine and I had to release both men from ministering healing and deliverance prayer with us, from praying for my family and me, and from being under my leadership and mentoring. The perspective on the biblical material above came as we asked the Lord why these men had gotten so far off track under our watch, and as we began to study Scripture on the theme of false prophets and false teachers. What the Lord showed us is that we must catch such issues *much earlier* and not gloss over them for the sake of the person under our spiritual covering, for the sake of the rest of our ministry team, as well as for our sakes. By now we've learned that the earlier these sorts of issues are caught in the life and ministry of a prophet or leader, the less heartache will be caused to all involved, as well as to the Lord.

I tell this story to save you, dear readers, from unnecessary grief, by alerting you to the fact that false prophets aren't *born*—they are ***made***, if the leaders to whom they are accountable fail to be led by the Spirit to lovingly confront and correct them.

The end of the matter: Receive all God wants to give you, and give it away

My prayer is that you will not make the same mistakes I made. I wholeheartedly encourage you to support what God is obviously doing through the Lakeland outpouring. My prayer is that you will be used by the Holy Spirit to empower and equip as many leaders in the next generation as possible to receive the glory and Presence of the Lord and take it to the nations. We need to give ourselves to the Lord and His cause of preaching the gospel with power to all remaining unreached nations and people-groups, to hasten the Day of the Lord, when Jesus will return for His Bride, the worldwide Body of Christ!