

The Counterfeit Christianity of Tele-evangelists – Part II

By Dave Miller

4. "Place Your Hand on the Television Set. . . "

What about the practice of the viewer placing his or her hand on the television set or the screen when the evangelist holds up his hand and tells the viewer to do so? This action is very similar to the practice of some who claim to heal people through prayer cloths. The evangelist supposedly touches the cloth and then mails it to the individual in order to convey healing power. Once again, the Bible knows nothing of such behavior. Oh, it is true that Jesus and his apostles possessed the power to heal people and they could even transfer healing through cloth (Mark 6:56; Acts 19:12). Luke calls that type of miracle "special" in Acts 19:11, because that kind of activity was *not the norm*. It was unusual.

Notice that it was Jesus and the apostles who possessed this kind of power. The only other people who could perform miracles and heal people were those upon whom the apostles laid their hands and, in so doing, transferred that miraculous capability. The only *recorded exception* to that rule is found in Acts 10 where the household of Cornelius was baptized with the Holy Spirit directly from God, without any assistance through the apostles. But that is the only recorded example that we have of people receiving miraculous capability from God, other than the apostles. Very carefully notice Acts 8:18, "*Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given*" Now compare that context with Acts 6:6, 19:6 and 2 Timothy 1:6. You will see that the only way a person had a miraculous gift was if the apostles had transferred that capability through the laying on of their hands.

Now think for just a moment. Unless a tele-evangelist today is an *apostle*, or has had one of the first-century apostles to lay hands on him, he simply *has no power from God* to perform miracles or to heal anyone. Not one of those who claim to have that kind of power have been willing to *demonstrate that power* under conditions where his claim can be authenticated and verified. For years Bible believers have challenged the so-called "faith healers" to prove their claims right out in the open for the unbeliever to see. Do you know what they say in response? "Well, you have to have faith." Now wait just a minute. If *you* have to have faith before they can perform a miracle, tell me why Paul said that miracles, like tongue speaking, were "signs" for unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). Why does the New Testament consistently affirm that miracles, signs and wonders were for the very purpose of *backing up the claims of the preacher* in the presence of the skeptic and the unconverted?

Please read carefully Mark 16:20, Hebrews 2:3-4, Acts 14:3; 4:29-30. These passages teach that *you cannot receive a miraculous capability today*. They teach, in fact, that you must take God's word and study it for yourself and from it learn how to live for God. And, as a matter of fact, those passages clearly teach that there are no preachers today, there are no tele-evangelists today, who can raise the dead, who can speak in tongues, or who can heal anyone from any disease or sickness. *The very purpose behind those miracles in the first century was to convince the unbeliever that the inspired preacher was representing God and speaking*

accurately. Once all of that information was put into the Bible - and we now have a completed revelation - there is no need for miracles to confirm the word.

5. The Practice of Tongue Speaking

Some tele-evangelists will be talking along in English, then suddenly they will lapse into a supposedly unknown tongue for just a few seconds before returning to English. They claim by this practice that they are "speaking in tongues." We must ask this question: Is that practice biblical? Can you go to the Bible and verify that this sort of thing took place in the first century? I hope that you will notice with me these scriptural points.

All tongue speaking by human beings in the Bible was done in *human languages which the tongue speaker had not studied, but which people in the audience did understand because it was their native tongue.* In Acts 2, you will see that on the day of Pentecost the apostles were empowered to address an *international* collection of Jews. They were gathered in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven and, therefore, they all spoke different languages - each one speaking his native tongue. Acts 2:6 tells us that *"every man heard them speaking in his own language."* Now isn't that clear? The "tongue speakers" of the first century spoke a tongue that was unknown to them because it was not their own native tongue, but they only spoke it to an audience who understood the language.

The Bible knows of no such thing as an "unknown tongue." In 1 Corinthians 14, the word "unknown" in the King James Version is in italics, indicating it does not appear in the original Greek text. The translators supplied the word "unknown," hoping to round out the meaning. But they have actually generated more misunderstanding with that particular decision. The very purpose of tongue speaking in the first century was to show that Christians could speak in the language of the unbeliever whom the speaker was addressing. The very purpose of tongue speaking was to impress the unbeliever with the fact that God was enabling the tongue speaker, who had never studied that language, to speak in that person's own language and in this way demonstrate his divine backing. This proved that God was the author of the truths that the tongue speaker was speaking.

Now stop for just a moment and think about what we are seeing on television today. We are seeing unintelligible gibberish that the tele-evangelists engage in. That is foreign to the New Testament and serves no useful purpose except to try to fool people. The Bible, in fact, *condemns all tongue speaking that is not understandable to the audience.* Read closely 1 Corinthians 14:9, 23, 28 and you will *see* that to be the case. Besides, the New Testament teaches that tongue speaking, and all other miraculous gifts, were only temporary, in existence while the early church was in a state of infancy while the scriptures were gradually being revealed. But once God revealed all the inspired revelation that he wished to make available, the purpose and usefulness of miraculous gifts reached its end. In the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, they were "done away" (Read 1 Cor. 13:8-10; Eph. 4:8-13).

Conclusion

Let me urge you to examine carefully the religious claims of all men. Do not accept any man's word for what God says. Be like the noble Bereans of Acts 17:11 who *"searched the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."* Do what Paul said to do in 1

Thessalonians 5:21. *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."* Don't fall prey to those of our day who, like the untaught and unstable in Peter's day, distort the scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16).

Instead, I urge you to be like Paul who urged Timothy to *"give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth"* (2 Tim. 2:15). Don't be fooled by "counterfeit Christianity."