



Media Spotlight

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

ORAL ROBERTS:

AN OPEN LETTER
REGARDING FALSE PROPHECIES

by Albert James Dager

The following is a reprinting of a letter I sent to Oral Roberts in October, 1989, pointing out to him certain statements he had made over the years regarding the building of the City of Faith hospital and the Oral Roberts University Medical School. The statements in question were uttered as prophetic messages given to him by God. As such, they carried the impact of Holy Writ upon those who believe that there are prophets today to whom they can look for direction in their spiritual lives and, in this case, direction on where to sow their monetary gifts to the Lord.

I sent copies of this letter to fifteen men whom I consider Oral Roberts' peers in the field of public ministry (whether false or not, you judge). As of the date of this printing I have heard from only three of those men, and I've reproduced their answers at the end of this special report.

October 19, 1989

Oral Roberts
Oral Roberts Ministries
P.O. Box 2187
Tulsa, OK 74171

Dear Oral,

Recognizing that a man of your importance is extremely busy, in all humility I ask that you take the time to read this lengthy letter. It is written out of concern for you, with the hope that I may be able to help you in an area of great importance.

One of the reasons many people have supported you over the years is that they believe you hear from God directly—supernaturally—in a manner most Christians only wish they could. When you told your supporters that they must help you build the City of Faith hospital and medical complex it was because you had received a vision from God.

It has been characteristic of your pronouncements to add the qualifier, "God said," or some other phrase to suggest that what you are telling us is a direct message from God. You regard yourself, as do many others regard you, a prophet of God. Yet many of your "prophetic" statements have not come to pass. Please consider what I say for your own benefit, Oral. It is a serious thing to announce that God has spoken when, in fact, a man has spoken presumptuously.

In order to help you see the seriousness of these things, I have condensed certain events into specific instances, and present them in chronological order. My research has been careful, knowing the great responsibility that is upon my own head to adhere to truth:

• 1960: You claimed that God told you to make His healing power known throughout the earth:

In 1960 Roberts believed God spoke to his heart and said: "Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is dim, where My voice and My healing power is not known. To go even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours. And in this, I am well pleased." (Stephen Strang, "Not Perfect, Just Forgiven," *Charisma*, May, 1987, p. 6.)

To date, none of your students' work has exceeded your work, at least as far as your publicity has revealed.

• 1977: You said you received a vision from God telling you to build the City of Faith. Later, you claimed that you saw a 900-foot-tall Jesus who told you the vision will soon be realized, and that the hospital will be a success. (The City of Faith was indeed built, but it was never really a success. Now that it will be closed it will never be a success.)

• 1981: City of Faith opens.

• 1983: You announced that Jesus appeared to you in person and commissioned you to find a cure for cancer. (Richard N. Ostling, "A Family That Prays Together," *Time*, July 4, 1983, p. 38.) There has been no cure for cancer found at ORU or anywhere else. Did Jesus make a mistake in commissioning you?

• 1986: You told us that God gave you a mandate to turn ORU medical school into a total missionary outreach to the nations within one year, and to put students under full scholarships with room and board. Jesus promised that, if you and your prayer partners come into agreement and stayed in agreement, several of the missionaries would be in the nations by the end of the summer of 1987. (These were not to be part-time visits, but regular service: one year of service for each year of full scholarship.)

As I have shared with you since last March, God gave me a mandate at that time to turn the ORU medical school into a total missionary outreach to the nations. He gave me one year to do it. And He said if I didn't do it, my work would be done and He would call me home.

Partner, time is running out. God told me I was to put our young physicians-in-training under full scholarship with their room and board so that when they finish their residencies, they will NOT go into medical practice here in America (where there's a surplus of doctors). Instead they would enter into agreement with this ministry to serve on Missionary Healing Teams in those nations closed to the gospel... (*sic*) but that need doctors so desperately they'll take our Healing Team evangelists and other workers IF WE SEND THEM DOCTORS.

God said, *I want you to use the ORU medical school to put My medical presence in the earth. I want you to get this going in one year or I will call you home!...*

God said, *It will cost \$8,000,000 and I want you to believe you can raise it.*

At the time this issue of *Abundant Life* is going to press, we have only \$4,500,000 of the \$8,000,000 needed above and beyond the regular expenses of the ministry....

Jesus promises if we agree and stay in agreement, He will come into our midst so that several of our young medical missionaries can already be in the nations by the end of the summer. (Oral Roberts, "It's Time We Came Into AGREEMENT," *Abundant Life*, January/February, 1987, p. 3.)

Agreement was to be evidenced by your reaching the goal:

The only reason my life could be over on earth in March is because we've not come into AGREEMENT to bind Satan's power and loose the money that God says belongs to us for our needs to be met...and so that we can get the gospel out. (Ibid., p. 5.)

Yet the medical missionaries were not sent out as you said Jesus promised. Note, too, that the amount you said was needed was \$3.5 million ["...we have only \$4,500,000 of the \$8,000,000"].

• 1987 (January): God told you that you had failed to send the medical missionary teams out; in order to do so you had to raise \$8 million by March 1 or God would take you home:

According to Roberts, the money will be used to provide full scholarships for medical missionaries who will later be sent to Third World nations.

...On his program "Expect a Miracle" of January 4, Roberts claimed that unless he received \$4.5 million for scholarships at Oral Roberts University Medical School, God would take him home by March....

The televangelist said that \$3.5 million has already been raised, but urged his supporters to extend his life by providing the remaining \$4.5 million before March (*Christian Research Journal*, Winter/Spring 1987, p. 5.)

Originally, in your own publication, you stated that you already had \$4.5 million and needed the balance (\$3.5 million) to reach the \$8 million goal (see above). The media picked the wrong number and, it seems, it suited you to use the \$4.5 million figure throughout your appeal.

• 1987 (March 22): Jerry Collins, dog track owner, gave you \$1.3 million to meet the goal of \$8 million. (*Seattle Post Intelligencer*, March 23, 1987, p. 1.)

• 1987 (April 1): You announced that you had raised almost \$1 million above the \$8 million goal, and that the need will be ever present:

"I've been through hell and back trying to convince people that \$8 million won't do it. It's got to be above our regular needs, and we need it in April and May and June and July and 1988 and 1989, 1990, 1991, until God returns to the earth," he said.

On April 1 on his son's daily television show, Roberts announced that \$9.1 million had been raised, enough for the medical scholarship program, \$700,000 to make up operating deficits and a \$400,000 "overflow." (*Seattle Post Intelligencer*, April 6, 1987.)

• 1987 (November): You announced that the City of Faith medical clinic will close in three months:

"...I believe we made a mistake...in organizing a clinic to go along with our hospital," Richard Roberts said. The City of

Faith's non-profit hospital and research center will remain open. (*USA Today*, November 4, 1987)

• 1988 (January): You cancelled the free medical tuition program:

The Oral Roberts University School of Medicine will no longer provide tuition-free scholarships to all students, a program that received national attention last year when the evangelist claimed God would "call me home" if it could not be funded. (*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, January 29, 1988.)

• 1988 (March): The scholarship fund went bankrupt, and you required students to repay scholarship funds at 18% per year interest if they transfer to another school rather than stay on at ORU medical school and start paying the high tuition:

One year after TV evangelist Oral Roberts raised \$8.7 million by saying God would "call me home" unless he found money for full medical scholarships at his university, the money is gone and the scholarship students might have to foot bills up to \$71,000 each.

Officials at Oral Roberts University School of Medicine in Tulsa, Okla., also have told the 50 freshman students that if they transfer to avoid paying such high tuition and expenses, they will have to repay the scholarship money they already have received this year plus 18 percent interest, a total repayment of \$26,550 each, according to documents and interviews with students and university personnel.

Several students said they had been told the scholarships were for four years of medical school and now feel betrayed and embittered that Roberts would lure them to enroll under what they called fraudulent pretenses.

Roberts' son, Richard, yesterday called the charges of misrepresentation "baloney" and "absolutely false." He said his father had made clear during his appeal last year that the money would be used "to operate the medical school for one year," which included scholarship funds for one year. (*Seattle Times*, March 25, 1988.)

Dr. Larry Edwards, dean of the medical school, said the \$8 million given last year by Oral Roberts's prayer partners to finance the scholarships will be used for that purpose, but the school will not try any more massive drives to give medical students a free ride....

Edwards said he knew some people would question the new plan in view of Roberts's past appeals for scholarships. "The answer to that is simple," he said. "Oral Roberts never claimed he was wedded to a particular methodology. He said he was wedded to the purpose of God. I believe our new plan is an expanded vision of that purpose." (*Christianity Today*, March 7, 1988, p. 46.)

The phrase, "a free ride," makes it appear as if ORU had been doing the students a favor out of the graciousness of your heart. Yet you, yourself, stated originally that God told you to provide full scholarships (*Abundant Life*, Winter/Spring, 1987, quoted above). Now, your son, Richard, says that the students' claims that they had been promised full scholarships is "baloney." Are we to assume that God's original command was "baloney," as well as your consistent promises of full scholarships?

And can Edwards call a cut-back and "expanded vision"? This, Oral, is what George Orwell referred to as "doublespeak," using misleading terms to give false impressions. You should speak to him about this.

• 1989 (September): You decided to close the medical school and the City of Faith hospital to pay off debts:

"It was a tremendous undertaking," Roberts conceded. "Medical education is far different from any other form of education I've ever been associated with."

But Roberts does not see it as a failure.

"I don't think it's as bad a day as it seems. I think we'll look back on this and think it's the right thing," he said. (Seattle *Times/Post Intelligencer*, September 17, 1989, p. A10.)

Oral, in view of your claims that you acted at the behest of God, certain questions arise:

• Were you lying when you said you saw a 900-foot-tall Jesus that told you to build the City of Faith Hospital?

• If what you saw was really Jesus, did Jesus fail by not fulfilling His promise?

• If the promises failed (which they did), then was what you saw really Jesus?

• If what you saw was not Jesus, then what was it—a lying spirit?

• If this was a lying spirit, how many other "visions" you've received over the years have been from lying spirits? How many enterprises have been financed with millions of trusting people's dollars that went to keep Oral Roberts and his family in the media limelight and living a lavish lifestyle?

• Since the medical school is being closed and you will not be able to make good on your commitment to send medical missionaries to third-world countries, can we expect God to take you home?

• If, after having you raise \$8 million in 1987, God failed to provide for the medical school, why did God bother to threaten you in the first place? Why didn't He just let it fail then?

• Will you refund the millions of dollars to the trusting people who believed you when you said, "God said"?

• Will you publicly repent of having spoken presumptuously to the Body of Christ in stating that God told you to do all these things that have failed?

Oral, if this letter seems to hit you hard, please believe that it was written in a spirit of love and concern for your spiritual welfare. Many people, among them leaders in the Church, consider you a prophet of God. If they close their eyes to the reality that you have misled them, they will have to answer to the Lord for following you. For your sake and theirs, please repent publicly and return the money that was given for these enterprises.

I realize that may mean selling everything else your ministry holds as investments and such, And, in fact, you may never be able to repay fully what has been raised under false pretenses. But to do all you can to make things right would be the only thing that would place you in right standing before God and before the brethren.

Please let me hear from you quickly, as I feel obligated to bring these facts to light for the benefit of the brethren. I would like to do whatever I can to help you do the right thing. I am sending a copy of this letter to certain of your peers in the hope that they will understand and offer their help to you.

In the spirit of God's love and concern,



Al Dager
Editor & Publisher

cc: Jamie Buckingham
Kenneth Copeland
Paul Crouch
Billy Joe Daugherty
Billy Graham
Kenneth Hagin
Jack Hayford
Rex Humbard
Larry Lea
Fred Price
Pat Robertson
James Robison
Demos Shakarian
Stephen Strang
Robert Tilton

The following cover letter was sent on October 19, 1989, to the fifteen men named above, along with copies of the letter to Oral Roberts. The envelopes were marked and highlighted, "PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL."

Dear (name),

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter I wrote to Oral Roberts expressing some concerns of mine regarding certain alleged prophetic utterances and expressions of God's having told him things which have failed to come to pass.

I have sent this to you and to several others of Oral's peers in the hope that you and they will take to heart what I have stated and will help Oral do the proper thing to set things straight before God and before the Body of Christ.

My motive is love, first of all for God, and secondly for the Body of Christ, but also for Oral Roberts.

Please let me hear from you regarding your input on the matter.

In Jesus' love,



Al Dager
Editor & Publisher

Within one week I heard from Paul Crouch:

I've received your letter and the epistle you have directed to Oral Roberts.

It is a sad litany that you have written to Oral Roberts. It would take a second or third reading to let the full implication of this letter to sink in.

At this point, of course one does not know what the reaction of Brother Roberts will be to your letter, but our prayers are with him that the Lord will indeed strengthen him to do what he needs to do.

Thank you for sharing this letter with us.

The second week of November, 1989, I received my letter back from James Robison with a hand-written note on the bottom:

I cannot predict Orals' response to what you have shared but it does voice the concerns of many. I do not know how he will respond. I shared some of these concerns with Oral in the past.

You did right sharing your heart with him directly. Please do be in prayer and do not become critical. We must pray and never judge.

Fred Price sent a lengthy letter defending Oral as a man of God, comparing his circumstances to that of Moses, and placing the blame for his failures on those who did not support him.

I received two form letter responses from Copeland, thanking me for writing and offering me opportunities to support him.

I wrote to Paul Crouch, James Robison and Fred Price, thanking them for at least taking the time to respond, and encouraging them once again to urge Oral Roberts to do the right thing.

My answer to Fred Price is reproduced below because it contains essentially all that I said to Paul Crouch and James Robison, but addresses his statements as well:

Dear Fred,

I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to respond to my letter regarding my concerns about Oral Roberts' false prophecies. It grieves me that only you, Paul Crouch, and James Robison made any effort to acknowledge my concerns. Ken Copeland Ministries sent me a form letter thanking me for writing and offering me an opportunity to support them.

No doubt the others are very busy men. But the magnitude of the problem, both in terms of the multi-millions of dollars and the misdirection of trust generated by Oral's statements should command at least some attention by anyone to whom the letter was sent. As busy as you are, you recognized the gravity of the situation. How sad that so few others did.

To date I've not heard from Oral Roberts either. Recognizing that even letters marked "personal and confidential" might be prescreened and never reach his eyes, I sent it to fifteen men in the hope that at least one of them would bring it to his attention. I wonder at the futility of trying to reach people who have placed themselves so far out of touch with us "little people."

I'm afraid the only recourse I have is to publish my letter to Oral as an open letter in the hope that some of our brethren will no longer be duped into believing him to be a prophet of God. Perhaps, too, he will become aware of his problem through that means. In any case, my love for the Body of Christ compels me to do what I must to warn as many as will receive my small voice.

Knowing your kind spirit and the extraordinary effort you make to warn the brethren not to judge one another, I'm certain that my course of action will grieve you. But I believe that if we cannot judge error in the Church we leave ourselves and our brethren open to deception. Thus, to refrain from speaking for fear of being judged as judgmental, in my opinion, is not an expression of love, but of cowardice.

We're speaking about Oral's eternal destiny here. And I will risk the wrath of those who judge me judgmental—indeed I will risk God's judgment of me as judgmental—in order to exhaust

every means to bring Oral to repentance and a desire for restitution of what he has taken from the brethren under false pretenses.

We cannot judge another's heart, but we must exercise judgment in regards to their words. Otherwise, how can we recognize error? And how can we keep the faith untainted? The apostle Paul tells us that we are not to judge those outside the Body of Christ, but those in the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 5:12) and those who call themselves our brethren (vs. 11). But in our judgment of their error, I believe we must also concern ourselves with their spiritual welfare and pray that they will humble themselves before God and the brethren in order that their sins not be held against them. True love judges, but grieves in the judgment process. Those who refuse to judge and refuse to warn others of error (both those committing the error and those deceived by that error) are partakers of the deceiver's sin.

So, too, those who continue to allow Orals' credibility to go unchallenged, who appear with him on the same platform and allow him to teach as a prophet of God, have proven themselves false prophets as well.

Your defense of Oral doesn't address the proper issue. Please reread my letter to him. It isn't that others failed to follow what God told him to do. The issue is that, according to Oral, God promised that all these things would come to pass. We cannot liken Oral's circumstance to that of Moses, because God's promises did come to pass, even though they were not favorable. God put conditions on the Israelites entering the Promised Land. He did not put conditions on the people for finding a cure for cancer or for the sending out of the medical missionary teams, or for the success of the City of Faith, etc., etc., etc. The only conditions Oral said were in effect, were on Oral himself for failing to send the medical missionary teams out. Inasmuch as he has failed to do that, why has the Lord not made good on his promise to take Oral home by now?

In defending Oral, you have not helped him. You have hindered his coming to repentance. No man is above the Word of God. But the "good old boy" club among the Christian media elite seems to think otherwise.

We are all watchmen to one degree or another. But woe to us if we fail to sound the alarm.

Again, may I encourage you to bring this to Oral's attention for his own sake? Help the man, will you? I can't reach him, but maybe you can.

With great concern,


Al Dager

Conclusion: Since Oral did not put God's "medical presence in the earth" within the year specified, why is Oral still with us? This is the most glaring error due to the impact his appeal for \$8 million had not only on the Church, but on non-believers as well.

But there is a blessing in all this: Since none of the "prophets" who appear in Oral's circle have warned the Church or disciplined Oral on these errors, those who have looked to these people for direction, and understand what they have witnessed, can now be released from their bondage. They need only turn to God's Word for direction on His plan for their lives instead.

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