

WHO IS THAT MAN? - Part 2

(This is a continuation from last month, my message from Mark 8:1-26)

In the past few months I have heard a few comments in our church from people who feel uncomfortable with the "new" teaching, from time to time, about healing and demons. Let me address that: When you follow Christ, He leads you past your comfort zone, He stretches you! You have heard that in sermons year after year.

- **Abraham** - After Abraham was an old man, and His wife was already past child-bearing age, God told Him he would be a "father of many nations." Then 25 years later, after God's prophetic words came to pass, God told Abraham to take his son to Mount Moriah and offer him up as a burnt sacrifice! Did these things take Abraham out of his comfort zone a little bit?
- **Joseph** - As a young man, Joseph had a dream that he would be a ruler and his family would bow down to him. Not long after that, Joseph ended up in a dungeon in Egypt - for 13 years! Believe me, Joseph was stretched!
- **The disciples** - The disciples accepted Jesus as the Messiah. They thought that meant He would be an earthly king, like King David. He ended up on a cross, dead and buried! Their faith was stretched to the breaking point.
- **You** - Do you really think that your faith, your doctrine, your life as a disciple of Christ is going to be smooth and comfortable? If you think that, you have never studied the Bible and you are out of touch with reality! For you who have been following Christ for a while, you have already been stretched almost beyond endurance, right?

Let me share a bit about some ways God has stretched me, and this is only a small part of the story: **PRISON MINISTRY** - About ten years ago, some friends started telling me I should take my inner healing ministry into prisons. I was afraid to do it. I was intimidated. Just think about it. You go behind those forbidding walls, they shut those big gates, take you deep into that prison into a big room full of guys that look Ronnie! ((Ronnie Higuera is our worship leader. He has four big problems: (1) He was a member of a motorcycle gang (2) He lived in Southern California (3) He publicly supports the Raiders (4) He has a vicious dog named Killer. To date, he has only repented of Numbers 1 and 2.))

When I started going into prisons, I loved it, and I love the guys there. Of course, God knew that I would love it, but He had to stretch me to where I was willing to obey Him.

MEXICO - The church I pastored (or pestered) in Loveland supported a missionary family in Mexico. About 25 years ago, the missionary, Ford Wilson, started inviting me to come preach in Mexico. I was a little chicken and wouldn't do it. After three or four years, I finally agreed to go, and, of course, I loved it and love the people there. For the past 20 years I have spent at least one or two months per year ministering in Mexico. That is more than two years. I have preached in hundreds of churches - - in big cities like Mexico City, Guadalajara, Morelia, San Luis Potosi, Aguas Calientes, Oaxaca, etc, and in small cities and villages without number. I have been in some big, rich churches like ours (all churches in the U.S. are rich), but mostly in small, poor churches, some with dirt floors, some with a tarp for a roof. Most churches in Mexico have unpainted, uncovered concrete floors, with concrete block walls. In southern Mexico, lizards run up and down the walls, which took some getting used to. In tropical Mexico, in the south, many of the churches are simply a concrete slab with a thatched roof and no walls.

There are many styles of worship in Mexican churches. Some are quiet and formal, where the

women wear veils and everyone wears a suit and tie. Most of the churches are exuberant and loud. ((With the all-masonry construction and no carpets or sound-deadening baffles, the decibel level is somewhere between "Painful" and "Agonizing." I stuff my ears full of Kleenex, smile, and sing.)) In one church I remember clearly, the band was a keyboard and three sets of drums, with 12 speakers! I counted them. It sounded like World War III.

In many churches they have girls or women dancers who accompany the worship. They wear long skirts and wave ribbons or flags. It is reverent and beautiful. In many of the churches I visit, mostly Pentecostal or Charismatic, the people celebrate and dance during worship. I watched them do that for a long time, and on an occasion when I realized I was the only misfit in church, I said, "What the heck!" and started dancing with them. ((That is not my gift, but according to the Bible it is an acceptable form of expressing praise to God.)) My dancing career lasted for several years, but then one night the church was especially joyful and the dancing went on for 30 or 40 minutes. That night when I went to bed, both my legs started cramping, and it was torture. I mostly retired from dancing at that point.

I learned a lot about being a Christian in Mexico. I have met some of the finest Christian pastors and people that I have ever known. They have almost nothing, but they live lives of love and sacrifice. I have met a few Pharisees, too, but you usually find a few dandelions in every lawn. But the point is that through my ministry in Mexico, GOD STRETCHED ME! Boy, did He ever!

Over the years I have seen many hundreds of people saved in my meetings. In all honesty, that had almost nothing to do with me. It was like knocking ripe fruit off a tree. The fruit was ripe because of the love and prayers and sacrifice of the faithful Christians in Mexico. But mostly it was because of the Holy Spirit. He is moving in Mexico. Jesus is working among the people! **Jesus is the Savior!**

Over the years I have also seen hundreds of people healed (in Mexico, in prisons, in churches in the U.S.) as our team prayed for them. I have seen people healed of almost everything. I have seen a few healed of blindness. ((I have never seen anyone healed who was born blind, but I have seen people healed who were classified as legally blind. I remember a man saying that his vision was like being in a semi-dark room, and after we prayed for him he said it was as if someone turned the lights on. PTL! (I know who the Someone was who turned on the lights.) I also have seen people healed who were totally blind in one eye. See Chapter 10, Danger of the Occult, in my web-site for an example of a blind person healed.))

I have also seen God heal people of partial deafness or total deafness in one ear, of cancer, of diabetes, of a multitude of diseases and pains. Last July I was on a team of 30 people who went to Leticia, Colombia, on the Amazon. As we were leaving, waiting in the little airport, a little, crippled lady limped past us. Her right foot was turned out 90 degrees. We asked her if we could pray with her and she readily agreed. We learned she had been born with this disability, her right ankle was frozen into position, and she had no feeling in her lower leg and foot. It was as stiff as a piece of wood. Over a period of almost an hour, we prayed for her, and gradually she felt tingling in her foot, the ankle started becoming flexible, and before we left, she could force her foot to the front and walk in a straight line! She was laughing and crying, and so were we! (I love this ministry!)

Who healed that lady? Well, we were Jesus' hands, but it was certainly Jesus who healed her! **Jesus is the healer.**

(At this point, we presented two wonderful testimonies by video from two ladies in our church who were touched with God's healing - Ila Crocker, who was profoundly touched about six months ago and healed of debilitating arthritis, and Charmane Adams whose back and leg were touched by God only a few days ago. Charmane's right leg grew out an inch or more during the ministry.)

Over the years I have also seen hundreds of people set free of demonic control! Since my ministry is focused on inner healing and deliverance, I could relate scores of stories on this subject. **Jesus is the deliverer.** Who is that Man? He is the Savior, the Healer, and the Deliverer, just as the Bible presents

Him.

I realize that some church people have a problem with the idea of demons, and the idea of casting out demons. They haven't heard any teaching about it in their church experience, although it is an important theme in the New Testament and was a focus of Jesus' ministry, along with preaching the gospel and healing. So Christians wonder, "Is that stuff real? Is it reasonable to believe in those things?" Pastor Kirk and I have had experiences that proved to us the validity of this teaching. (You might watch my testimony on Video on my web-site.)

But it is not our experiences that authenticate this teaching, it is the Bible that authenticates our experiences! It's scriptural! It's what Jesus did and taught the disciples to do. Just read the first several chapters of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It's normal Christianity! It is not extreme or fanatical. Our problem is that for most of us our church experience has been sub-normal. We have been fed Pabulum, baby-food, in our churches. It makes me very unhappy! And it grieves the heart of God. The preaching and teaching of the church is a matter of life and death. People are lost, going into eternity without God, dying of diseases that Christ wants to heal, being deceived and destroyed by the devil, and the congregation is hearing irrelevant, innocuous preaching week after week. "We mustn't offend anyone, especially the tithers, we have to be seeker-friendly." The Apostle Paul said he preached the whole gospel and would not be guilty of the blood of anyone when he stood in judgment before God. Preaching is a very serious matter. I plead with you, my friends, and I also warn you: Take Jesus Christ seriously! He is the Bread of Heaven, He the Way to God, He is the only way to heaven, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." He is the Savior, the Healer, the Deliverer, and no one comes to God except through Him.

Scriptural preaching is utterly necessary in our world. Our society is broken and is coming unraveled. I don't have to tell you: the economy, drugs, broken homes, pedophiles, natural disasters. I don't think the Democrats or the Republicans have the answers in this time. Only God has the answers. And we need more than teaching, we need the power of God to save and heal and deliver broken people.

This is my invitation and challenge as you consider this teaching:

REPENT for your doubt and unbelief regarding the Word of God, **it is sin!**

If you have a habit of dismissing the Bible as God's Word, **repent!**

If you have doubt about Jesus being the divine Son of God who died on a cross for our sins, **repent!**

If you doubt that He was literally raised from the grave, **repent!**

If you doubt that the healings and miracles and deliverances from demons in the Bible are really true, or if you believe those things may have happened 2,000 years ago, but they certainly don't happen today, **repent!**

Ask God to have mercy on you for your hardness of heart and to give you revelation into reality.

DON'T BOW DOWN TO TREES, ROCKS, OR SOUP

The prophet Jeremiah ridiculed the people of his day who were "Saying to a tree, you are my father, and to a stone, You gave birth to me." They were covering a piece of wood or a rock with silver or gold, bowing down to them, and saying, "You are my god, you created me, I worship you!"(Jer. 2:27) Pretty stupid, isn't it?

In our society, people believe that lightning struck the primordial soup and life just happened! First, a single-celled organism appeared, and in a while it turned into a fish, into a frog, into a dog, a monkey, ape, man! Voila!

I'm reading a book, The Fabric of the Cosmos, which is mostly about quantum mechanics. (I don't understand much of it, but many Christians are excited about how the insights in Quantum theory seem

to correlate with Biblical truths.) The big bang is recognized by most all scientists as the way things started. The whole cosmos exploded from a dot smaller than the eye can see, and it is still expanding into infinity. But where did the dot come from? One theory follows, and this is a lulu: "The cosmos always existed. Periodically, when it gets through expanding, it will start contracting and fall back into a tiny dot. Like a burned out star collapses into a black hole. Everything will go, as it were, through a knothole and come out inside out to start the whole process over. The only difference is that right is now left and vice-versa." I think that is brilliant! But if we're inside out, why aren't our liver and intestines now on the outside?

This is the point I want to make: We don't need to fear any scientific discovery, but a lot of it is simply unprovable theories. In other words, faith. To believe that the universe is eternal and the source of all life is idolatry, just as surely as the people of Jeremiah's day believed they were created by a tree or a stone. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*

YOUR WORK COUNTS!

Frequently my attempts at ministry appear to be powerless and fruitless. A couple brought me their 17-year old son the other day. He is a beautiful young man, but the rebellion etched around the lines of his mouth and in his eyes is startlingly clear. The ways he is expressing his rebellion are putting his life and soul at risk. He didn't want what I was selling, and since God will absolutely not violate our free will, there is nothing his parents can do but pray for wisdom, pray for him, and entrust him into God's hands. I joined a friend in praying this week also for a man eaten up with cancer. His pain lessened as we prayed, but there was no indication that he was healed.

I discovered 1 Cor.15:58 again this week, and it has been speaking deeply to me. I have even managed to memorize it! *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."* Wow! If our work is in the Lord, which means according to His will, led by His Spirit, motivated by love, and honoring to God, then our prayers for people are never wasted. Our prayers for our family are never wasted. My preaching opportunities which at times seem to be such duds are never wasted. Even a cup of cold water given in the name of the Lord will be rewarded. And every word that goes forth from the mouth of God (even when it is diluted by going through our mouths) will not return to Him void, but will have the effect with which He chooses to infuse it.

Let us be encouraged, determined to keep on keeping on, knowing that He is blessing all of it!

"I HAVE 7,000 IN ISRAEL WHO ARE MINE!"

You Bible students recognize this paraphrase about the 7,000 as being God's correction to his prophet, Elijah, who was running in fear from Queen Jezebel. Elijah had complained that he was the only one in Israel who was faithful, and God said, Oh, no, you're not! There are 7,000 people who have never bowed their knees to Baal.

This was a revelation to Elijah. There were 7,000 hidden, invisible, people scattered in the nation who were completely faithful to their covenant with God. Amazing! Ahab and Jezebel had outlawed Yahweh worship and were hunting down and killing everyone who would not kiss the feet of the idol, Baal. It was exactly like North Korea today. Statues of the little ego-maniac Kim il Jung 2nd are everywhere. Christians are hunted down like animals and stuffed into concentration camps where they are starved and worked to death while they are being re-educated.

I prayed for an older man at the altar of our church last Sunday. He was not very deep doctrinally, but he is humble and sweet, and I learned that he and his wife have raised, and are still raising, their

five grand-children. And he told me that after hearing Pastor Kirk's sermon about the church reaching out to children he was going to talk to his wife about adopting another child! Good heavens! He and his wife are two of the 7,000 hidden ones.

And I mentioned in the article above the man eaten up by cancer. When my friend and I walked into his trailer, we found a CD by the Gaithers going full blast, and the man was praising God with his arms raised and tears coursing down his cheeks. He told us later that when he praised God he forgot the agony in his spine. Great days, he is in far better shape spiritually than I am. Another one of God's hidden 7,000.

I complain a lot about Sunday-only religion, and sometimes I might imply that I am one of the few faithful ones around here. It is just possible that God sees some things that I don't see and that the least and the last are going to be standing at the head of the line on that day.

QUOTES AND REFLECTIONS

- Jesus only marveled at two things: (1) Faith (2) Unbelief (lack of faith).
 - I read somewhere that many lives are summarized by "a single defining moment." For example, when I think of Winston Churchill, I think of his post-war speech at Harvard. He came forward, was silent for a long moment, and said, "Never, never, never, give up!" Then he sat down. Wow! That summarized and defined his courageous leadership of Great Britain. On the other hand, when you hear the name Elliot Spitzer, you will probably think of his public exposure and humiliation and subsequent resignation as governor of New York. Ecclesiastes 10:1 says: *"Dead flies putrefy the perfume and cause it to stink. So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor."* And Proverbs says that a man's good name should be carefully guarded. So to someone who is reading this newsletter, I say, prophetically: "Now don't do something dumb and lose your good reputation and mess your whole life up!"
 - **"If.....Then...."** Many times in Scripture these words are either used or implied. For example, "If you will follow Me, Then I will make you..." God is dedicated to allowing us to have free will. He will never coerce us, either before or after we accept Christ. Every decision we make is important in time and eternity. We are planting seeds, and they will bear fruit, good fruit or bad fruit.
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MINISTRY

Several of us representing Freedom Fellowship ministered in a prison in Canyon City on the second weekend in July. We saw God move powerfully, including several physical healings. (This is one of the prisons where they have a program of training dogs from the Humane Society, and it is a great program and makes a measurable difference in the spirit in the prison and in the recidivism rate.) At the end of the seminar I prayed a Father's blessing over the men, many of whom received curses and rejection but never a blessing from their fathers. It was an emotional time. Then six of the men came forward to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and prayed to receive tongues. One of the men had a little black and white dog, and as we prayed it started meowing! It was speaking cat! (Not really, but it's possible. Ha!)

Got some bad news the other day. I was scheduled to go on another Amazon trip, to Brazil and Bolivia, in August. My team leader, Tony Nichols, from Siloam Springs, Ark., called to say he was not able to raise the necessary funding. We need \$13,000 (over and above our plane tickets, hotels, etc.) to cover food and lodging for the pastors and leaders who come to the seminar. They don't have any extra money to pay these expenses. Most of these pastors eat only one meal a day, and they are making a

great sacrifice to travel to the seminar. Many travel several days by river boat to get there. Tony called all the people who usually donate from \$1,000 to \$3,000 to fund the seminars, and received only \$60! Whoa! Things are getting very tight out there! We are deferring this seminar till next spring, by which time we hope to raise the funds.

Several people have asked me if it isn't dangerous for an old codger to be traipsing around the Amazon. Dangerous! I'll tell you what's dangerous: nursing homes! (followed closely by hospitals). Every morning I check the obituaries, to make sure I'm not there, and what do I see? People dying like flies - in nursing homes! I've never seen a report of anybody eaten by piranhas or jaguars while boating on the Amazon. Isn't it obvious that nursing homes are death traps, and you had better run like a rabbit if anybody tries to put you in one. (Run to the Amazon.)

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