

The God Of Prosperity

A False But Very Popular Doctrine

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 12-Sep-09; Sermon #956c

Televangelist Joel Osteen came to Charlotte last evening preaching his brand (I guess you might say) of the gospel. It certainly was not the gospel of Jesus Christ; it was the gospel of Joel Osteen. There was a front page story and a picture of him in the Charlotte Observer this morning, and he was pictured there with his arms up in the air. I guess that must be sort of a traditional preacher gesture. The reporter was Tim Funk, by the way; some of you may be familiar with that name. I will quote for a while:

Over ten thousand people were before him, hearing a mix of inspirational stories, up-tempo, praise music, and promises that God can't wait to bring blessings like promotions, restored health and rejuvenated marriages to those who are struggling. . . . His smiling image, blown up on two jumbo screens, repeatedly cast the economic recession as just another obstacle that God can bulldoze out of believer's paths. He urged his Charlotte flock to see 2009 not as a year to survive, but a year to thrive.

Interestingly, the Observer reporter also remarked about the "two and a half hour *show*. . . ." Before the service, people milled around tables selling all things Osteen: books, calendars, sermons, DVDs. He doesn't take an offering at his Sunday sermons, but he did last evening. People drop contributions in "champion of hope" offering envelopes.

He vaguely talked about staying connected to God. Do you know what they did not hear about? S-I-N. People did not hear about the Kingdom of God, which was what Jesus preached about. They did not hear about repentance. They did not hear about how to make sure they had a relationship with God, and they did not hear about obedience to God. They did not hear about giving Him their life; that is, to the One who gave them life in the first place. They did not hear about sacrifice, which is central to the entire issue of a relationship with God. All they heard about was *getting* from God.

Well, Joel Osteen, may be America's most popular preacher since Billy Graham. But in this man's estimation, he doesn't even deserve to stand in Billy Graham's shadow in terms of the quality of his messages. He is the pastor of America single largest church congregation. It's located in Houston, Texas. The congregation is the Lakewood Non-Denominational. It has forty thousand members. In addition, over seven million people watch his televised sermons each week. His message are an abomination to true

The God of Prosperity by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Christianity.

In Luke 6:26 Jesus is recorded as saying,

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Conversely, Jesus warns in John 15,

John 15:18-19 If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

The popular acclaim by the public has no bearing on God's judgment. God is looking for truth in the message.

Mr. Armstrong used a generality when he said, "When Billy Graham came into town to preach, the crowds grow larger each evening. When I came into town to preach the crowds got smaller each evening." When Billy Graham came into the town he was largely preaching to the choir, to people either already converted or at least already leaning towards something already familiar to them.

When Mr. Armstrong preached, it was to people unfamiliar with the "strange" combination of beliefs and—in many cases—already hostile to it. They heard messages dominated by what God demands of us, and *why* He demands it, not about getting things for themselves. Well, the day of reckoning is coming after Christ's return.

Kim Myers was in the book of Zechariah ["What's Your Attitude? (2009)"]. In Zechariah 13:3-5, Zechariah prophesies regarding false prophets:

Zechariah 13:3-5 It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies [this is after Christ's return], then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LOORD.' [That is following a command, brethren in Deuteronomy 13.] And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies. And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to

The God of Prosperity by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

deceive [that is, appearing to be humble]. But he will say, 'I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

Joel Osteen's day is going to end and he is going to then pay for the popularity. We can hope that he repents, and I hope that he does. But right now, brethren, he is nothing more than an entertainer.