
The Gospel according to Bill Johnson - Part 3

Details

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Part 3 of a three part series

Great End-Time Revival

Bill Johnson is convinced there will be a great end-time revival initiated by an “Elijah generation”; a concept rooted in the heretical *Latter Rain Movement* (its name derived from a misinterpretation of Joel 2:23) which started in 1947 at an airport church in Canada. Sound familiar? The Toronto experience of the 1990s is also rooted in *Latter Rain* teaching and started at an airport church (in Canada). According to Latter Rain teaching an “Elijah generation” will arise to transcend all other generations of Christians in their ability to do great miraculous works of power; these people will be *The Manifest Sons of God*.



BJ declares:

We will carry the Elijah anointing in preparing for the return of the Lord in the same way that John the Baptist carried the Elijah anointing and prepared the people for the coming of the Lord ([1](#)).

William Branham first claimed to have the “Elijah anointing”. This is a demonic doctrine. Even if you look at this in the context of the *Old Testament*, before all believers were given the same anointing of the Holy Spirit, when Elisha asked Elijah for his anointing, Elijah said, in effect, it was not his to give. Even in the *Old Testament* the “anointing” was not transferrable in the way BJ falsely teaches at his *School of Supernatural Ministry*.

BJ claims:

The purpose of the anointing is to make the supernatural natural ([2](#)).

Just learn how to do it at his school (for a fee of course)! Frankly, that sounds more like Hogwarts 1 than a Christian ministry school and the supernatural manifestations occurring at *Bethel* would be more at home at Hogwarts than a Christian ministry school.

This “special generation” of Christians with the “Elijah anointing” will allegedly initiate a great revival of “signs and wonders” greater than those of Jesus; a great revival that will prepare the way for Christ to be invited back to earth by a victorious bride. BJ states:

I live for the revival that is unfolding and believe it will surpass all previous moves combined, bringing more than one billion souls into the Kingdom [\(3\)](#).

Contrary to clear New Testament teaching that all Christians are equally anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, with Jesus Christ uniquely being The Anointed One, false teachers like BJ claim certain Christians can attain a special “anointing”. This is the special “anointing” BJ claims William Branham had that I referred to in part 2. BJ claims:

He [the Holy Spirit] lives in all believers, but the glory of His presence comes to rest on only a few [\(4\)](#).

John warned about this kind of claim in 1 John 2:18:

...even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

In the Greek, “*antichrists*” means “opposite or opposed to Christ, the anointed ONE”. This special “Elijah Generation” of anointed ones certainly fits the description of antichrists claiming miraculous powers that John warned about.

BJ claims:

...there will be no contest when such counterfeits go up against this Elijah generation that becomes clothed with heaven’s power on the Mount Carmel of human reasoning [\(5\)](#).

God has provided us with **much** information about the signs and circumstances surrounding the return of His Son, so if this “Elijah generation” is going to change the world and prepare a kingdom for Jesus’ return, surely it will be mentioned in God’s Word. Let us therefore take a look at what God tells us about the end-times kingdoms.

The End-Times

Chapter 2 of the book of Daniel tells us how Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue, which was a prophetic representation of the global kingdoms that were to come throughout history, ending with the final kingdom before Christ’s return. In the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream we have a **God-given** roadmap of the future of humanity, leading right up to Christ’s return.

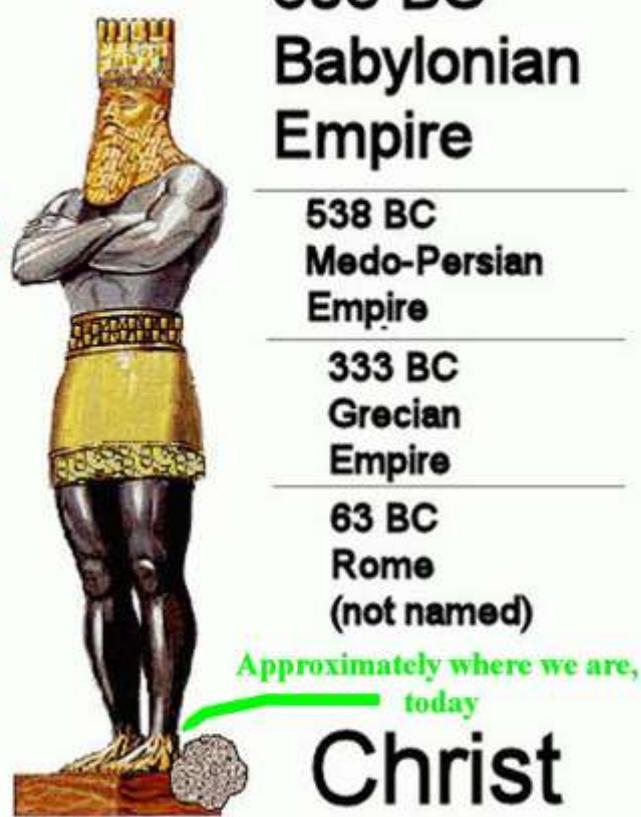
Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2

The Times

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The Interpretation

Daniel's God-given interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream depicted Babylon as the great head of gold, Medo-Persia as the chest and arms of silver, Greece as the thighs of bronze and Rome as the legs of iron; legs because the Roman Empire split in two between East and West (with the Eastern Roman Empire outlasting the Western Roman Empire by almost a thousand years). Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream has thus far been fulfilled throughout history with staggering accuracy.

The fourth kingdom Daniel saw was represented by the ten toes of the statue made of a mixture of iron and clay, giving clear indication that the final human empire will be an extension of the Great Roman Empire (iron), but mixed with something else (represented by clay). As iron and clay does not mix (or adhere) together the final kingdom in human history will be partly strong and partly weak, thus compromising its integrity and strength.

God confirmed all this to Daniel in a vision, which is recorded in Daniel 7. Daniel's vision began with the sea, which (according to Isaiah 17:12-13; Matthew 13:47-51; Revelation 13:1 and 17:1, 15) represents the Gentile world. Four beasts arose from the sea. Verse four described the first beast as being lion-like and represented the Babylonian Empire. The lion is majestic and more powerful than all other creatures.

The second beast Daniel saw arising from the sea was bear-like and represented the Medo-Persian Empire. The bear Daniel saw was lop-sided being raised up on one side, which represented the fact that whilst the Medes and the Persians were joined together in power, the Persians were by far the more dominant power of the two.

The bear had three ribs in its mouth, having devoured the flesh. The ribs represented the three kingdoms the Medo-Persian Empire conquered in the process of attaining their empire: Lydia, Babylon and Egypt. The bear is less majestic than the lion; it is slower and more weighty, representing the fact that the Medo-Persian Empire conquered by sheer size and force of numbers.

The third beast revealed to Daniel was leopard-like with four wings, representing the Greek Empire. The leopard is less majestic than the lion and less impressive than the bear, but is more swift, so represented the speed with which Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persian Empire and extended the Greek Empire. The four wings on the leopard-like creature represented how, after Alexander's death, the empire was split between his four generals: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander and Lysimachus.

The final beast, representing the final empire in human history, is described in Daniel 7:7-8. Unlike the other beasts, the fourth beast is not described in terms of an animal. It is described as being "*dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong*" and "*had huge iron teeth.*" It is far more ferocious than the previous three beasts and breaks into pieces all that preceded it.

The fourth beast in Daniel's vision had ten horns, but an eleventh horn arose ("a little one"), which uprooted three of the ten other horns. In this horn, "*were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.*" These ten horns in Daniel's vision parallels the ten toes of iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and therefore provides more information to help us understand how the final empire in human history will work. The ten horns represent ten regions of government (or "kingdoms" as confirmed by Revelation 17:12) that the world will be divided into under a future one-world government, with the "*little horn*" arising and initially taking over three of these regions (or "kingdoms"). Once the three horns have been overcome, the remaining seven horns will capitulate to the "*little horn's*" power, thus making the "*little horn*" ruler of the world and ruler of the last empire in history.

Scripture is clear that the "*little horn*" is the Antichrist and his empire will be defeated by the return of Jesus Christ as conquering King, but not before Antichrist is given power to wage war against the Saints (Revelation 13:7).

So where in all this is the Christian "Dominionist" kingdom of the "Elijah generation" that is supposed to usher in the return of Christ? Did Daniel predict the previous kingdoms absolutely right with breath-taking accuracy, only to completely miss the mark in his interpretation of the final kingdom? I do not think so.

Daniel 2:44 tells us that God's kingdom will be established and will destroy all the previous kingdoms, so if anyone thinks the kingdom made of iron and clay is the Christian "Dominionist" kingdom of the "Elijah generation", they need to explain why God has said he will **destroy** it along with the other kingdoms.

There are those who believe the "*stone cut out of the mountain without hands*" referred to in Daniel 2:45 is the Christian "Dominionist" kingdom of the "Elijah generation". This is a very dangerous and flawed theology, because the "*stone cut out of the mountain without hands*" is a clear reference to Jesus Christ. Surely the best clue that it is not the man-made "Dominionist" kingdom is the fact that the stone is "*cut out of the mountain without hands*" (emphasis added). Proponents of this view are putting the church in place of Jesus Christ!

The fact is that **nowhere** does Scripture teach that a special "Elijah generation" will arise to perform "signs and wonders" at the end of the age to usher in God's kingdom. Jesus in fact warned that such "signs and wonders" at the end of the age would be a **deception** (Matthew 24). Furthermore, rather than the church getting stronger and stronger prior to Christ's return, the Bible warns of a massive falling away (apostasy) from the faith (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

In Matthew 24, Jesus warns that prior to His return "*the love of many will grow cold*" (Matthew 24:12). Of the four different Greek words for "love" used in the New Testament, the Greek word used for "love" in this passage is *agape*, meaning the Love of God. The only people who can express the love of God are born-again believers in Jesus Christ. So Matthew 24:12 is describing what will happen to **believers** prior to His return. Jesus Himself asked rhetorically whether He would find faith on the earth when He returns (Luke 18:8), and

speaking of the last days Jesus also said, “Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved” (Matthew 24:22).

All this hardly describes an “Elijah generation” of Christians taking dominion over the earth by supernatural “signs and wonders” in order to create “heaven on earth” before inviting Christ to return.

The only way of getting the Bible to say that the church will end up triumphant in this age is to take Old Testament prophecies about Israel’s restoration in the Millennial kingdom ruled by Jesus on earth (i.e. **after** His return as Messiah) and apply them to the **church** at the end of this age (i.e. **before** Jesus returns); but then “replacement theology” does go hand-in-hand with the over-realised eschatology of “Dominionist” theology.

But it gets worse with prophecies of “Joel’s Army”

Joel’s Army



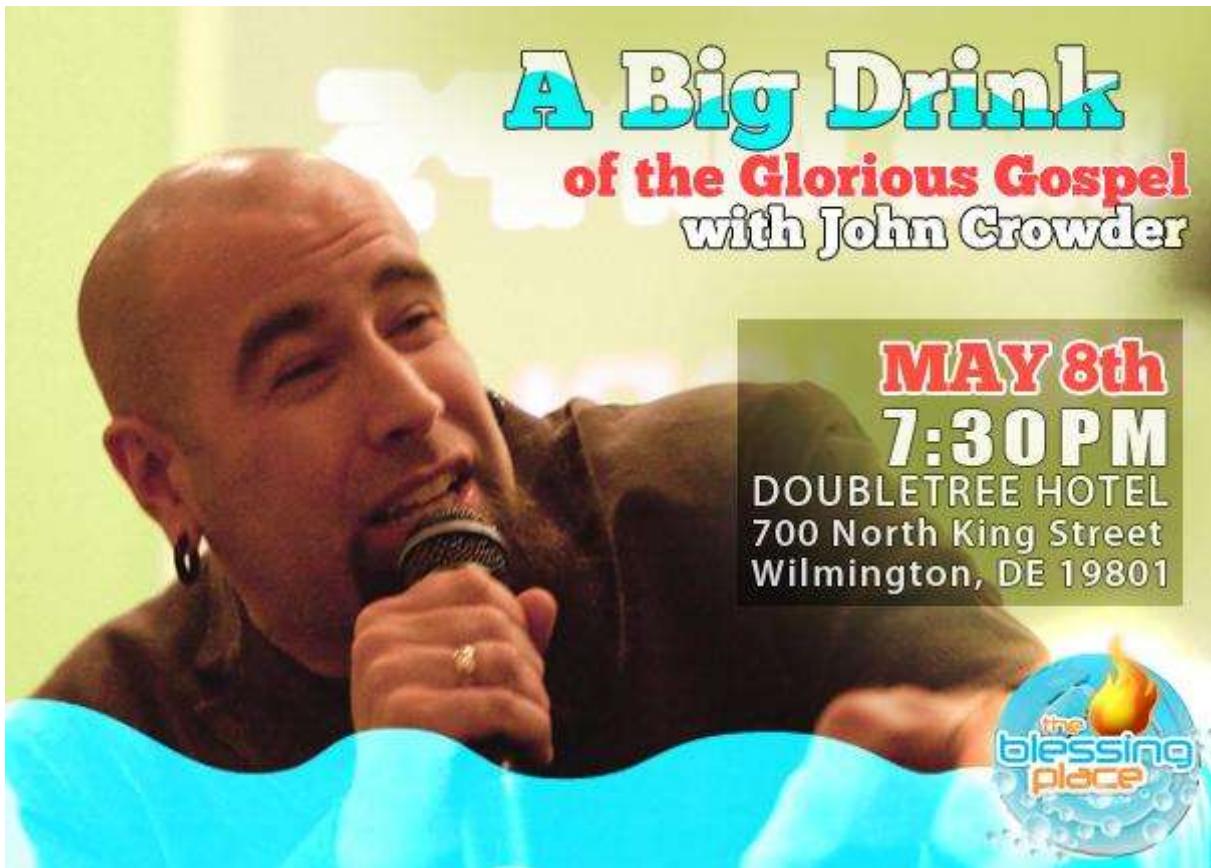
All this “Elijah generation” and “Elijah list” end-times world revival doctrine is rooted in the demonically influenced **Manifest Sons of God** heresy of William Branham, and given further oxygen by the demonic **Joel’s Army** teaching of Branham’s protégé Paul Cain (and others in the Prophetic Movement such as BJ’s friends Bob Jones and Todd Bentley). This doctrine declares that a generation of super-Christians will perform “signs and wonders” that will usher in God’s kingdom on earth, much like the “Elijah generation”, but then goes further to reveal a darker militant side to this doctrine of demons, teaching that **Joel’s Army** is a real army being raised by Jesus to take the earth by **physical aggressive force** (declaring “civil war” no less) as well as by “signs and wonders”. Dr Clifford Hill warned of this teaching in *Prophecy Today*:

...the ‘new breed’ is an elite group of believers endowed with supernatural power that would enable them to be part of the army of ‘dread warriors’ that God was said to be raising up in our generation... According to John Wimber this is a type of Joel’s Army, who will overcome all opposition to the gospel and eventually subdue the nations... The government of the nations will be upon their shoulders and when all the secular authorities, governments, princes and kings have finally submitted to them, Christ will return and they will present the kingdom to Him (Volume 7, Number 1).

This heretical teaching is based on a total misinterpretation of Joel 2, which when prophetically referring to an army in fact describes a **demonic** army of avenging locusts, and is further referenced as such in Revelation 9!

BJ makes reference to Joel 2:28-29 on page 184 of *When Heaven Invades Earth* when making a case for the “outpouring of the Spirit in the last generation”. As with so much of BJ’s teaching, what he writes about Joel 2 is partially right – it is a mixture of truth and error. BJ rightly points out that Joel 2:28-29 was partially fulfilled at Pentecost when the church began (Acts 2:17-21), but contrary to BJ’s claim, complete and final fulfilment of the prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) will **not** be on the end-time church (“Elijah generation”) but will be on **Israel** when Christ returns. Yet again we see the over-realised eschatology of “Dominionist” theology replacing Israel with the church.

Followers of BJ should be warned to listen out for the terms “Elijah generation”, “Elijah list”, “Joel’s Army”, “Manifest Sons of God”, “New Apostolic Reformation”, “new breed”, “new wave”, “third wave”, “over-comers” etc, as they are clear indications of heretical teaching.



BJ has even spoken favourably of John Crowder of “toking the Holy Ghost” fame (i.e. getting high on the Holy Ghost by smoking it like pot, shooting it up in his arm like a heroin addict, or sniffing “lines” of the Holy Ghost from the pages of a Bible! – watch it on YouTube and be repulsed. Just do a Google search on John Crowder – toking the Holy Ghost). Crowder believes he has supernatural powers because he is a “Manifest Son of God” – a new breed of super-Christian who are distinguished from “ordinary” Christians by their invincibility, immortality and divinity. John Crowder promotes his book titled *Miracle Workers, Reformers and the New Mystics* as a manual on “how to become part of the supernatural generation”. John Crowder practises demonic Roman Catholic Mysticism, including “prayer soaking”. There are a number of references on the Bethel School website to “prayer soaking”. This has nothing to do with biblical Christianity.

Jesus – Man, not God



Even more disturbing is BJ's belief about Jesus Christ. BJ believes that during His earthly ministry Jesus operated only as a man and **not** God. BJ says:

He performed miracles, wonders, and signs, as a man in right relationship to God **not** as God. If He performed miracles because He was God, then they would be unattainable for us [\(6\)](#).

I do not disagree with BJ's statement in itself; it is clear orthodox Christian doctrine that Jesus operated His earthly ministry as a man, through a perfect relationship with His Father, with an earthly mission to fulfil the will of the Father (John 6:37) and through the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Luke 5:17 says that Jesus could only perform healings when "*the power of the Lord was present*", and John 5:19 tells us:

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

However, BJ's statement takes on a very different and less orthodox meaning when other declarations of his are taken into consideration about Jesus' divinity on earth. For example:

He laid his divinity aside as He sought to fulfil the assignment given to Him by the Father [\(7\)](#).

Whilst I have already acknowledged Jesus operated His earthly ministry as a man, rather than as God, Scripture never suggests He laid aside His divinity; Jesus was always both fully God and fully man. Jesus laid aside His "Majesty", the glory that His position of being God demanded, but He did not lay aside His divinity. He laid aside His divine privileges, not His divine nature. Look at Philippians 2:6-10:

who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.

BJ's claim that Jesus "laid aside His divinity" puts a more disturbing slant on his statement that Jesus "performed miracles, wonders and signs, as a man in right relationship with God... not as God"; particularly

when one considers the following statement from BJ, which blurs the distinction between us and Christ and diminishes the uniqueness of Christ:

For us to become all that God intended, we must remember that Jesus' life was a model of what mankind could become if it were in right relationship with the Father [\(8\)](#).

On the contrary, the Bible makes clear that Christ was the Creator and distinct from His creation (see John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2). Jesus was affirmed to be the unique divine Son (Mark 9:7) by a voice from heaven. Jesus' deity was affirmed many times in the gospels. The gospel writers used Jesus' mighty works to prove His deity, not just that He was in "right relationship with the Father". If BJ is right and Jesus laid aside His deity whilst on earth, then the mighty works prove only that Jesus learned what anyone could learn if he had the right faith and relationship with God. This is the shaky foundation on which BJ's *School of Supernatural Ministry* is built.

The basis of BJ's theology effectively nullifies the Gospel message. Jesus is no longer unique, but only a special "anointed" or enlightened one who could lead the way to many such "anointed" or enlightened ones in the future.

BJ writes:

The anointing is what linked Jesus, the man, to the divine... [\(9\)](#).

Whether intended or not, this is disturbingly more akin to the New Age Christ rather than the biblical one. BJ claims that Jesus received His "anointing" when He was baptised by John the Baptist, and I will come back to this important point later.

Serious Implications

The implications of what we find in BJ's teaching are serious, because BJ's statements create a slant on Jesus' nature that is far from orthodox Christology and is more in line with the *kenosis* heresy, derived from the Greek word *kenoo*, meaning "to empty". It is the heresy that Jesus laid aside His divine nature whilst on earth, and BJ clearly says: "Jesus laid aside His divinity."

The *kenosis* doctrine is based on a misuse of Philippians 2:7 where Paul says Jesus emptied Himself. This is falsely interpreted as meaning Jesus "emptied" Himself of deity and became only a man during the Incarnation. BJ's claim that Jesus "laid aside His divinity" during His earthly ministry is disturbingly similar to the *kenosis* heresy **and** the connected Word of Faith heresy that denies Jesus' deity when He died on the cross. They claim Jesus lost His divinity and suffered in hell as a man, which meant that **Jesus had to be born again**; and guess what? BJ claims Jesus had to be born again! He does not just make this claim once; he states it openly many times, but just one example is a sermon to his church on 15/8/2010 where he declared:

Jesus had to be born again, because He became sin.

Let me first deal with BJ's declaration that "Jesus was born again". As already referred to, the root of this claim is that Jesus laid aside His divinity whilst on earth; not in just the way He carried out His mission on earth, but that Jesus actually became a man, suffered in hell as a man and had to be born again because He was a man, not God; He laid aside His divine nature. Let me therefore spend just a little more time in refuting this heresy. Let us first consider the words of Jesus.

Jesus claimed:

I and My Father are one - John 10:30.

We need only look at the Jews reaction to this statement by Jesus to know He was claiming to be God, because they tried to stone Him and shouted, "...you, a mere man, make yourself God" (John 10:33). The Jews clearly understood that Jesus was claiming deity. Jesus did not deny the claim. When Jesus declared, "*I and the Father*

are one”, He was saying that He and the Father were of one nature and essence, not that He was just in right relationship with God. Here’s another example:

Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM - John 8:58.

The response of the Jews who heard this statement from Jesus was fury. They took up stones to kill Him for blasphemy, as the Mosaic Law commanded. “I AM” is the name God gave Himself when addressing Moses in Exodus 3:14:

And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’

The Jews who heard Jesus declare “I AM” knew exactly what He was claiming and it was not that Jesus was merely in a right relationship with God!

In Hebrews 1:8 we read how God the Father declared of Jesus:

Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever.

Jesus’ disciples clearly regarded Jesus as God. For example, Thomas cried out, “*My Lord and my God!*” (John 20:28) and John stated that, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God*” (John 1:1). Peter declared, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus’ disciples claimed He had the right to forgive sins – something only God can do - as it is God who is offended by sin (Acts 5:31; Colossians 3:13; Psalm 130:4; Jeremiah 31:34). In connection with that claim, Paul declared that Jesus is the ONE who will “*Judge the living and the dead*” (2 Timothy 4:1) and described Jesus as God made manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). Furthermore, Paul calls Jesus, “*Great God and Saviour*” (Titus 2:13).

There are many Scriptures that teach the deity of Christ (see Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6-8; Psalm 18:2, 95:1; 1 Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:20), but even just one of these is enough to show that Christ was considered to be God by His followers and not once did Jesus try to correct their understanding of Him as being God.

Jesus is also given titles that are unique to YHWH (the formal name of God) in the Old Testament. The Old Testament title “redeemer” (Psalm 130:7; Hosea 13:14) is used of Jesus in the New Testament (Titus 2:13; Revelation 5:9). Jesus is called Immanuel—“*God with us*”—in Matthew 1. In Zechariah 12:10, it is YHWH who says, “*They will look on me, the one they have pierced.*” But the New Testament applies this to Jesus’ crucifixion (John 19:37; Revelation 1:7). If it is YHWH who is pierced and looked upon, and Jesus was the one pierced and looked upon, then Jesus is YHWH. Paul interprets Isaiah 45:22-23 as applying to Jesus in Philippians 2:10-11. Further, Jesus’ name is used alongside God’s in prayer “*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2). This would be blasphemy if Christ was not God. The name of Jesus appears with God’s in Jesus’ command to baptize “*in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28:19; see also 2 Corinthians 13:14).

When BJ says, “Jesus was born again” people need to understand the **huge** false doctrine behind that very small sentence. It is a heresy that denies the very nature of Christ and therefore attacks the central tenet of the Christian faith; there is no doctrine more important than having a correct Christology.

Jesus was **not** born again, but was **resurrected** because death had no hold on Him, and death had no hold on Him because He was without sin of His own. He paid for our sins, but had no sin of His own to pay for so He did not have to be born again, but was resurrected. Look at what the three Gospels say:

He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay (Matthew 28:6)

But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him (Mark 16:6)

He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee (Luke 24:6)

All three accounts tell us that the angel declared Christ to be “risen”. The Greek word used is *anastasis*, meaning “rising up”, and is from where the word “resurrection” is derived. The term “born again” is derived from a completely different Greek word - *gennao*. For example, in John 3:3 Jesus tells Nicodemus:

Unless one is born again [gennao], he cannot see the kingdom of God.

The root of the error declared by BJ that “Jesus was born again” is the Word of Faith heresy that Jesus died spiritually as well as physically, and the divinity of Christ was destroyed, thereby meaning He had to be born again. Divinity is not something that is subject to change.

In John 3:6 Jesus says:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Jesus was conceived not by flesh, but of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Hebrews 13:8 tells us that:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

BJ shares this heretical doctrine with some very unsavoury bed-fellows such as Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts and of course E. W. Kenyon. I could quote all of these heretics referring to Jesus being born again as proof that BJ gets this doctrine from these false teachers, but as just one example, look at this extract from Kenneth Copeland:

And this was exactly the opening God had been looking for. Seizing the moment, He spoke His faith-filled words into the bowels of the earth, and suddenly—that word of the Living God went down into that pit of destruction and charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life.

He began to look like something the devil had never seen before. **He was literally being reborn before the devil's very eyes. He began to flex His spiritual muscles....Jesus was born again—the first born from the dead (10).**

How many poor souls reading BJ’s books or attending *Bethel School* will understand the heresy BJ is preaching (and the origin of it) when he says that seemingly simple statement: “Jesus was born again”? This is **serious, serious error.**

Jesus Became Sin

The second part of BJ’s statement that Jesus “became sin”, seems at first glance much closer to orthodox Christian doctrine than the first part of his statement that “Jesus was born again”. But as these two statements are inextricably linked in his theology, it is important we look at what BJ is really saying. The teaching that Jesus became sin is mainly based on 2 Corinthians 5:21:

For He made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The original Greek word used for sin in 2 Corinthians 5:21 is *hamartia*, which can be translated as either “sin” or “sin offering”; it is the very same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) in Isaiah 53:10, which renders *hamartia* as “sin offering” or “offering for sin”:

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand (Isaiah 53:10).

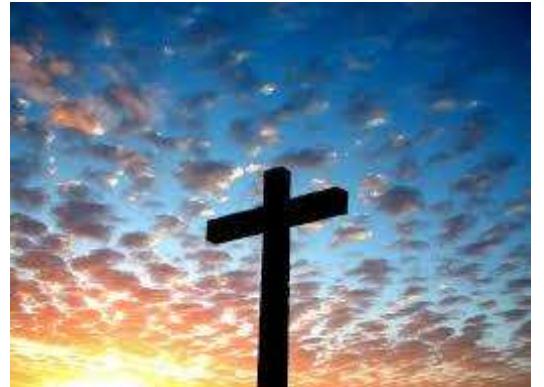
So which rendering of the Greek word *hamartia* is correct when used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21; did Jesus become sin or a sin offering? To start to answer that question it is worth noting that the word “*sin*” (*hamartia*) is used twice by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21. It would therefore perhaps be unreasonable to presume that Paul would use two different renderings of the same word in one short sentence like 2 Corinthians 5:21. For example, if the meaning of “*sin offering*” is used for both occasions when *hamartia* is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21 the passage it would read as follows:

For He made Him who knew no sin offering [*hamartia*] to be a sin offering [*hamartia*] for us.

Does that really make sense of the passage? Obviously not. However, just because “*sin*” makes more sense than “*sin offering*” when translating *hamartia* in 2 Corinthians 5:21, I do not think that is evidence enough to conclude that the word *hamartia* should **always** be translated as “*sin*”, rather than “*sin offering*”. I do not believe it is a case of either/or, but of both/and; Christ became both sin and a sin offering for us. We should not shy away from accepting that Jesus “became sin” just because it seemingly (on the surface at least) lends weight to Bill Johnson’s heretical claim that “Jesus was born again”. He did “become sin” for us and He was not “born again”.

The **huge** problem lies with what BJ really means when he says “Jesus became sin”; as with so many false teachers, BJ uses the same vocabulary as orthodox Christian doctrine, but uses a **very** different dictionary. When BJ says “Jesus became sin” he actually means Jesus **became sinful**, which goes well beyond what Scripture says about Christ’s atoning sacrifice and means BJ is guilty of doing exactly what Paul warned **not** to do in 1 Corinthians 4:6 when he declared, “*do not exceed that which is written.*” Jesus could only **become** sinful if He took sin into His own nature by committing sin Himself, which would of course cancel out Christ’s perfection and nullify His atoning sacrifice. How then you might ask, does BJ believe Jesus **became sinful**, but still believe in the validity of His atoning sacrifice? The answer lies squarely in the other part of Johnson’s declaration that “**Jesus was born again**”. BJ believes that Jesus **had** to be born again just like you and me **because** He not only became sin, but actually **became sinful** in nature like us. This is standard Word of Faith heresy.

The context of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for our sins once and for all (as per Hebrews 9:28) was of course the full and final fulfilment of the Old Testament animal sacrifice system. For example, if we consider the sacrificial offerings on the Day of Atonement, the two goats – the Lord’s and the scape goat – were both subject to the imposition of the priest’s hands to transfer (or impute) the sins of the people on to the goats. The people’s sins were not imposed upon the animal’s natures but upon their bodies. One goat died and one goat was released. Christ our sacrifice fulfils both – not symbolically but literally. Our sins were imputed to Christ and in return His righteousness has been imputed to us (Romans 4:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21b). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus did for us what we could not do ourselves. His work, not ours, removed the curse upon us because of our disobedience to the law and placed it upon Himself. He accomplished this by hanging on the tree (cross) and shedding His perfect blood as our substitute.



He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26).

Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28).

He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin (1 John 3:5).

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).

These verses speak of Christ bearing our sins and taking them away, but there was no sin in Him. His sacrifice under the law was perfect, without spot or blemish. Under the Old Testament law, it was the animals **shed blood**

that covered the sins of the people temporarily. Under the new law of grace, it is the perfect **shed blood** of Christ that takes away our sin permanently, and He could not have done this had He become sinful:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19).

The Key to unlocking the contradiction



Those who are familiar with BJ's teaching will rightly point out that whilst he does claim Jesus "emptied Himself of divinity", he is at the same time totally comfortable declaring that "He is eternally God" (12). Indeed on the surface at least, BJ would no doubt agree with much of what I have written about Jesus. How then can BJ hold in tension two contradictory positions on the divinity of Jesus? This is an important question, not least because it allows BJ to speak out of both sides of his mouth and cause confusion to his followers over the essential doctrine of the identity of Christ. Does BJ say Jesus "emptied Himself of divinity" on earth, but is "eternally God" because eternity by definition has no beginning and no end? Only BJ himself can

answer these questions, and I am yet to find a **biblical** answer from him. However, there is no doubt that key to trying to unlock BJ's contradictory position on the identity of Christ is a particular theology I have already touched upon several times, but is so central to BJ's doctrine that we must address it again. I refer to BJ's doctrine of "**anointing**". For example, BJ says of Jesus:

Christ is not Jesus' last name. The word means "Anointed One" or "Messiah" (13).

This of course in itself is biblically orthodox and correct. **However**, as with so much of BJ's theology, he then goes beyond biblical orthodoxy by trying to redefine "Christ" as "the anointing". He says:

It [Christ] is a title that points to an experience. It was not sufficient that Jesus be sent from heaven to earth with a title. He had to receive the anointing in an experience to accomplish what the Father desired (14).

Does Scripture teach this? On the contrary, Luke 2:11 alone tells us Jesus was the Christ from **birth**, not after having an experience:

For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

But BJ compounds his error by stating:

The word anointing means, "to smear". The Holy Spirit is the oil of God that was smeared all over Jesus at His water baptism. The name Jesus Christ implies that Jesus is the One smeared with the Holy Spirit (15).

So in BJ's Christology the "experience" Jesus had to have in order to be "anointed" with the title of "Christ" was His water baptism. The logic of BJ's statement would of course therefore demand that Jesus was not the Christ **before** he was baptised. Some reading this may think I am perhaps putting words into BJ's mouth. However, the following quote makes BJ's position crystal clear:

The outpouring of the Spirit also needed to happen to Jesus for Him to be fully qualified. This was His quest. Receiving His anointing qualified Him to be called the Christ, which means "anointed one". Without the

experience there could be no title [\(16\)](#).

So Luke 2:11 must be wrong then!

Bearing that in mind, perhaps BJ just has the timing wrong of **when** Jesus became the Christ? If only it was that simple! BJ believes that **every** believer can receive the same “Christ anointing” and this is the foundation of all his theology, whether it be on healing or anything else. BJ states:

...the outpouring of the Spirit comes to anoint the church with the same Christ anointing that rested upon Jesus in His ministry so that we might be imitators of Him [\(17\)](#).

In BJ's theology it is the **anointing** that is divine. He says:

The anointing is what linked Jesus, the man, to the divine [\(18\)](#).

In BJ's Christology, Jesus lacked divinity whilst on earth, except by virtue of the anointing. This has **nothing** to do with what the Bible says about Christ, but has plenty in common with the New Age understanding of “Christ”.

Conclusion



When BJ's doctrine and practice is honestly tested against the Word of God (as we are instructed to do), there can be no doubt BJ is a false teacher; his doctrine is a mixture of truth, truth out of balance and downright heresy. First President of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis S. Chafer (1871-1952) said:

All heresy is either the Bible plus, or the Bible minus.

But that should not surprise anyone who considers the polluted pool from which BJ draws his doctrine. It is a pool already made rancid by the heretics who have gone before him.

No doubt supporters of BJ may say God's grace and love covers all things as long as someone's heart is for God, and as they are sure BJ has a sincere heart for God, they can overlook certain errors. In response I would respectfully suggest that God's view of these matters is very different to theirs. Firstly, there is no mention in Scripture of God's grace or love covering false doctrine and false teachers. The Bible is in fact uncompromising in its stance on such matters. For example, Romans 16:17:

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Furthermore, God's Word teaches that real love cannot abound unless it abounds in doctrinal truth and discernment of what is true and false:

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment
(Philippians 1:9).

The Bible **never** says we should embrace false doctrine (or false teachers) under grace or love, even if it contains part truth, because God hates the mixture, and "a little leaven leavens the whole lump". Whether wittingly or not, supporters of BJ are being tolerant towards things that God is not.

Secondly, it is not my place or intention to judge BJ's sincerity or "heart for God"; but without the truth of Scripture as the anchor, at best all you have is a bit of truth mixed with a lot of sincere error. I think I may have already mentioned once or twice that God **hates** the mixture! This cannot be ignored or overlooked; BJ's teaching is a mixture at best.

God judges our love for him not by how much we cry about Him during meetings, or how fervent or animated we are in our prayer times, or how strongly we feel about Him, or by how much we appear to have a "heart for God"; God revealed to Jeremiah that:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings
(Jeremiah 17:9-10).

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

The answer to the question is then given: only the Lord. The heart's capacity for self-deception knows no bounds; the heart tends to tell itself what it wants to hear and is drawn to things that reinforce what it already desires; to follow after what it has always wanted. I believe this is what many who follow BJ are guilty of, because an honest look at Scripture exposes BJ (and those he associates with) as false teachers.

God knows the heart of man. The way of the world is to "follow your heart", but God says "*follow My commands*". Do not trust your heart and do not follow it. Do not put your trust in someone else's apparent "heart for God", no matter how sincere they may seem. Sincerity is no reliable litmus test for what is and is not truth.

We need something outside of ourselves to determine what is and is not truth – the Word of God! But BJ says, "God is bigger than His book" (11). On first glance that sounds right doesn't it? As if he is giving praise and glory to God? But it needs to be tested against what God Himself says. For example, when BJ refers to "His book" he of course means the Bible, the Word of God. What does God say about His Word:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

How does BJ's claim that "God is bigger than His book" in the light of what John states above? If the Word **was** with God, and the Word was God, how can God be "bigger" than Himself? He cannot! The Bible exposes BJ's claim to be empty of truth and is in fact a veiled way of giving licence to false prophets (like Bob Jones and Todd Bentley to name but two within the Prophetic Movement) to claim the most unbiblical things through extra-biblical means. Psalm 138:2 tells us the exact opposite of BJ's claim:

For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through words. In like manner, our worship of Him should be according to His Word. As John declares:

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17:17).

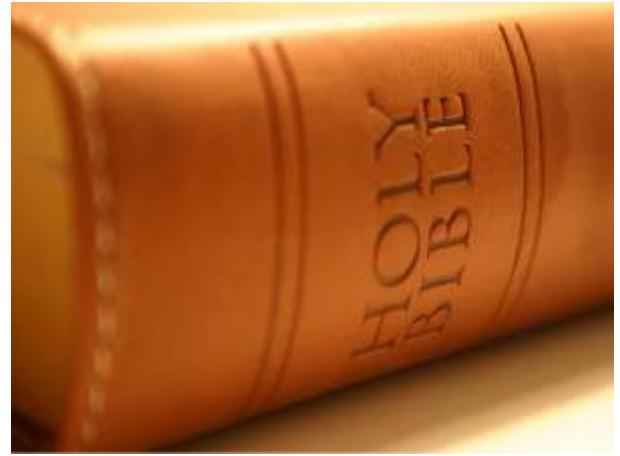
The Word of God gives the parameters for our experience of Him and stepping outside of those parameters is disobedience. Notice the last part of Jeremiah 17:10, which refers to, "*the fruit of his doings*". God judges us by

what we do - “the fruit of our doings”, not how our heart “feels” about Him. What someone does is determined by what they believe; false doctrine leads to false practice. God judges our love for Him by how obedient we are to His commands:

This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it (2 John 1:6).

If you love Me, keep My commandments (John 14:15).

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).



The Root Cause

False teachers like BJ (and William Branham, Bob Jones, Todd Bentley et al) are in reality not the root of the problem. The root of the problem is my friend and people like him who refuse to endure sound doctrine because of personal desire(s). Paul warned Timothy that such a time would come:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers (2 Timothy 4:3).



If people like my friend did not want to have their itching ears tickled, false teachers would not have an audience and would not survive; people like my friend are the oxygen false teachers need to breath and survive and it would be very easy to cut off their oxygen supply if there were not Christians who want to “heap up for themselves teachers” who will tickle their itching ears. If only their priority was God’s Word, rather than their own desires.

My friend has merely found teachers who have enabled him to articulate and express that which has always been in his heart. He is wilfully doing what so many Christians are guilty of: he is replacing biblical absolutes with an experience based faith of his own design; making the rhema (spoken Word of God) supersede the logos (the written Word of God). You get into serious trouble when you demote the importance of the logos and rely on

false teachers like BJ, Bob Jones and Todd Bentley et al to provide you with the rhema, i.e. what they tell you God is saying.

My friend (like so many other Christians) has specifically chosen Bethel School not to learn biblical truth, but to have his pre-existing prejudices and false beliefs and practices confirmed and affirmed. He has gone to Bethel because that is where he believes the “anointing” is.

I would ask you to pass on this article to anyone you know who is a follower of BJ or any of the other people I have mentioned in this article, and encourage them to do as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11) and carefully check to see whether or not what I have written is true. They need to know the truth and it is then up to them what they do with the truth.

A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats. **C.H. Spurgeon**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James (Jamie) Smith is a financial adviser who gives specialist advice to doctors and dentists based in Sheffield, England, where he was born in 1970. He was raised in a Christian family and became a believer in his childhood. Jamie is married to Emma. They have two young daughters, Holly and Heidi, and are members of a small independent evangelical church in Sheffield. Jamie writes on various matters of the Christian faith with the aim of encouraging and equipping fellow believers to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3) by being able “to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope within us” (1 Peter 3:15).



End Notes

1. When Heaven Invades Earth, page 184
2. Ibid, page 133
3. Ibid, page 23
4. Ibid, page 149
5. Ibid, page 150
6. Ibid, page 29
7. Ibid, page 79
8. Ibid, page 138
9. Ibid, page 79
10. “The price of it all”, Believers voice of victory, Sept, 1991)
11. When Heaven Invades Earth, page 92
12. “Healing and the Kingdom” – The Essential Guide to Healing: Equipping All Christians to Pray for the Sick, page 125, and “Healing and the Authority of the Believer” – as above, page 132-133.
13. When Heaven Invades Earth, page 79
14. Ibid
15. Ibid
16. Face to Face, page 109
17. Ibid, page 77
18. When Heaven Invades Earth, page 79