

## False Claims

The Church through the centuries has encountered many false claims.

Currently on sale is a book titled, "*A Divine Revelation of Hell*" by Mary K. Baxter, published by Whitaker House. Cost: \$17.00

Mary Baxter claims that her spirit left her body, and that she was taken by Jesus on a personal tour of Hell over a period of thirty nights, and that over an additional ten nights, she was taken to Heaven.

She went down a tunnel to get to Hell and passed some evil creatures on the way. Mary saw a woman who was a ghostly figure and had rotten flesh hanging from her skeleton. She saw many figures who were skeletons in the flames, some of them spoke, and Jesus responded.

She saw many pits in Hell to which people had been cast. Mary returns to her body on earth, but Jesus brings her back to Hell many times to reveal more.

The purpose of her writing is so that people will be warned about Hell and turn to Christ.

### Problems

There are many problems with this book. Mary sees skeletons in Hell, and one of the skeletons has rotten flesh hanging from the skeleton. On just this one point, she is in serious error. Our body will remain on earth when we die, and it will decay (Acts 13:36). Only the soul and spirit of a person goes to either Heaven or Hell at the moment of death.

The apostle Paul speaks of being absent from the body from the moment of death, "Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:6-8).

In another passage we read, "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." (Philippians 1:22-24).

All who have died wait for the resurrection of a new body. For those who go to be with the Lord, it will add to the joy which they already have and for those who are cast into Hell, it will add to the misery they endure.

The resurrection body will not suffer decay. "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Quite clearly, the claim that there will be skeletons and rotting flesh in Hell is false.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is in Hell with a supernatural body which is not consumed by the flames. He brings a request to Abraham that Lazarus dip his finger in water and bring it to him to cool his tongue (Luke 16:22). We should note that the rich man does not have a

perishable body which is reduced to a skeleton in the flames.

At this point, I must pour some cold water on the fanciful idea held by some that Hell is a place of terrible torture. The Bible depicts Hell as a place of just punishment. Some will be beaten with many blows and some with few (Luke 12:47-48). Also, "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." (Jeremiah 17:10). The punishment that God gives will be just and will be seen to be just. "...he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth." (Psalm 96:13).

Mary makes the claim that the object of Jesus taking her on a guided tour of Hell and of her writing the book is so that people will be warned about Hell and turn to Christ. The problem with that claim is that it is at odds with what Christ himself tells us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

The rich man puts forward the argument that Lazarus should rise from the dead and warn the brothers of the rich man of the torments of Hell, then they will repent. Jesus rejects this argument and says, "... 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31).

This claim by Jesus was later proven to be true when the soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus witnessed his resurrection and reported the matter to the chief priests, but they refused to put their trust in Jesus (Matt. 28:11-15).

Boasting of extraordinary experiences in the Spirit is not something which is new. The Apostle Paul encountered it in his time. He said, "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions." (Colossians 2:18). The Revised Standard Version is perhaps a little clearer, "... taking his stand on visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind."

The modern phenomena of seeing angels and Jesus probably had its beginning in the 1970s with the publication of a book in which the writer makes the claim that he was visited on several occasions by an angel. While on a flight in the US he looked out of the window, and behold, there was the angel travelling beside him! He also made the false claim that he had lectured at a Bible College in the Solomon Islands.

Someone made the discovery that Pentecostal Pastors in the US who had seen Jesus or had seen Heaven gained a large increase in their income and became popular on the preaching circuit. It was not long before the phenomena of seeing Jesus or going on trips to Heaven began to spread. The Mary Baxter book is an extension of this phenomena, she claims to have not only seen Jesus, but to have also gone to Heaven and Hell. Try to beat that!!

The extraordinary tale of Jesse De Plantis now follows.

## JESSE DE PLANTIS

His vision of Heaven

From video tape screened in January 1996

Jesse states that:

He prayed to see Jesus. But didn't Jesus tell Thomas, "... 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'" (John 20:29). Why is it that a minister of the gospel is not one of those who have been blessed by the Holy Spirit so as to believe without seeing?

He was in a restaurant with some friends having a meal when God revealed to him that he was to immediately leave and go to his room (a most inconvenient time).

After he went to his room there was the sound of a mighty rushing of wind. The next thing he knew, he was in a machine with an angelic being. They stopped at Heaven, and he got out. Why is God reliant upon a machine to transport angels and people to Heaven?

He saw Abraham, David and Paul and gives a brief description of the particular physical characteristics of each of the three. The trouble with this claim is that he sees the bodies of the three before the resurrection of the body. When the apostle John saw the martyrs in Revelation Chapter twenty, it is stated that he saw their **souls**. "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4) (NIV). The apostle John did not see their bodies.

He claims that the apostle Paul said, "What are they saying about my gospels?" But would Paul give even the slightest suggestion that the gospels are **his**?

The angel showed Jesse De Plantis his house. The house had similar furniture to his house back home. The claim here that we will be living in separate houses is not the impression I get from the bible.

He saw Jesus preach, but why is Jesus preaching in an environment where we shall know fully? (1 Cor. 13:12).

He asked "Where is the Holy Spirit?" Was told, "Down on earth" to which he replied, "Of course". The trouble with this statement is that it contradicts the fact that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent (everywhere at the one time).

When he said, "Praise the Lord" or a similar praise, it triggered a praise service. The actions of others are centred around his actions in this instance.

He saw children in Heaven who ran into the arms of Jesus. If children are still children in Heaven, are old people still old people?

He experienced wonderful aromas.

Then there was the incident where an angel said something that was wrong. So someone gives the angel a good punch so that he stumbles backwards.

Are we to believe:

1. Angels occasionally sin (fall short of God's perfect standard) in heaven.
2. Violence is a good method of correcting wrong actions in Heaven.

This one action - if you can believe it - raises more questions than it answers.

Jesus gave him a special commission to tell people that he is coming. But Jesse could have found that out from the Bible. Shouldn't all Christians, particularly ministers of the gospel, proclaim the news that Christ is coming again?

I believe the above points show that what Jesse experienced was the product of an active imagination, rather than an actual occurrence. It illustrates the poor state of some churches when it is found that even some pastors believe the above claims. Jesse was a key speaker at a Pentecostal convention in Australia in the second half of the 1990s; after he had published his account of his trip to Heaven.

His visit to Australia is in fulfilment of Scripture. "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Please note from the above passage that the blame is not laid at the feet of the false teacher as we might expect, but at the feet of the listener who does not want to receive sound doctrine. The listener has determined to support teachers who '...say what their itching ears want to hear.'

Jesse De Plantis is an associate of Kenneth Copeland.

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February 2004

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