

**Grace to You :: esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time**

## **A Mess in the Maternity Ward?**

Scripture: Titus 2:7–8

Code: B130725

## **Leveling Charges Against John MacArthur**

Popular theologian and apologist [Dr. Michael Brown](#) has written two articles for *Charismanews* critical of John MacArthur and the upcoming Strange Fire conference.

In his first article, "[John MacArthur, Strange Fire and Blasphemy of the Spirit](#)", Dr. Brown says John has "seriously overstepped his bounds and misused the Word of God" by wrongly accusing charismatic leaders of "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit." He further claims John is guilty of a double standard. Specifically, Brown says that while John calls on charismatic leaders to denounce the extremes within their movement, John does not call on noncharismatic pastors to denounce dangerous "once saved, always saved" doctrine.

Brown's second article, [An Appeal to John MacArthur to Embrace God's True Fire](#), takes issue with John's criticisms of the famed Brownsville Revival that took place from 1995–2000 at the Brownsville Assembly of God church in Pensacola, Florida. Michael Brown taught at the Brownsville Assembly during that time and denies that the movement was a "mindless, emotional orgy marked by irrational, sensual, and fleshly behavior" (John MacArthur's description). Brown says he can "testify to the fact that day after day, Jesus was exalted, the Scriptures were preached, and sinners were called to repentance and believers were encouraged to surrender their lives afresh to God."

He goes on to write, "It is only natural that when God moves powerfully, there will be excesses that need to be corrected and abuses that need to be put in order. . . . But I, for one, would rather have the noise (and mess) of the maternity ward than the deathly quiet of a cemetery." He concludes his article with an appeal to John to not put out the Spirit's true fire and, therefore, quench God's mighty work among Christians throughout the world.

Those are a couple of strong appeals coming from a well-respected Christian apologist. Personally, I have benefited from Dr. Brown's ministry. He has, for example, written an outstanding five-volume work that answers the Jewish objections to Jesus Christ and Christianity. Those books are not only an excellent study on the subject of messianic prophecy, they are also a worthy investment for anyone interested in evangelizing Jews. Moreover, I am thankful for Brown's unwavering boldness to engage present-day attacks on biblical morality—especially the rising tide of homosexual activism.

However, I believe Brown is wildly off-target with his critical remarks against John MacArthur. In fact, I am deeply troubled by such a profound lack of discernment—though Dr. Brown has written so thoughtfully on important aspects of apologetics, he dismisses the serious theological errors prevalent within the charismatic movement as mere "excesses."

## **Cleaning Up the Mess**

I am grateful that Michael Brown acknowledges John's strong convictions on the lordship of Christ. But that's precisely what makes the charge of double standard so far-fetched. The implication is that John MacArthur has quietly looked the other way when people use "once saved, always saved" as a prop for false assurance. The reality is, no one has been more vocal against easy-believism than John MacArthur.

I've heard Brown say on one of his radio programs that he has written against the extremes within the charismatic movement. It's hard to find evidence of that in the material he has posted online. Whatever Brown has written on those issues, I doubt that its quantity and potency approaches that of John MacArthur's critiques of easy-believism.

John wrote two extensive bestselling books on the subject: *The Gospel According to Jesus*, and a follow-up, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*. In fact, John has decried easy-believism in virtually every major book he has ever published, and he has consistently warned against the false assurance of people who profess conversion but live like unbelievers. The lordship of Christ and the folly of so-called carnal Christianity have been the dominant themes of his ministry for more than three decades.

Just search the Grace to You archives and you'll find dozens of sermons John has preached over the years addressing and correcting the very error of non-lordship that Brown says is embraced by many of the noncharismatic pastors who follow John MacArthur. I find it perplexing that Brown would even raise this as an example of a double standard on John's part. To borrow from Dr. Brown's analogy, the hallmark of John MacArthur's ministry has been to *clean up* the evangelical maternity ward.

### **Genuine Spiritual Babies?**

Yet what I find most alarming is how heedlessly Brown embraces charismatics who have made a career out of promoting false prophecies and grievous theological errors. Let me note a couple of examples.

In his first article, Dr. Brown chastises John for singling out Mike Bickle and Lou Engle, two men Brown describes as "godly leaders." Both Bickle and Engle are prominent figures in the New Apostolic Reformation, a movement founded by C. Peter Wagner. Wagner himself is known for making grandiose prophetic decrees like the [one he made in June 2006](#), in which he declared that all the wealth of the wicked would be released and transferred to God's chosen people. (I personally haven't seen any of that "transferred wealth" yet.)

Both Bickle and Engle were originally associated with the Kansas City prophets, a group of ministers who have been issuing false prophecies for years. They freely admit that a high percentage of their own visions, dreams, and declarations regarding future events have been in error.

Additionally, two of the original Kansas City prophets, Paul Cain and Bob Jones, were later discredited for scandalously immoral secret lives—Cain for alcoholism and homosexuality, and Jones for sexual impurity. Incidentally, Jones was a spiritual mentor to Todd Bentley, the Lakeland, Florida, evangelist who boasts of healing people with a mixed-martial-arts-style smack down.

Is the partnership between all those men inconsequential and unrelated? I don't think so. Perhaps Michael Brown would single out Paul Cain and Bob Jones as representing the abuses and excesses that need to be corrected when God sends revival. Yet, both of those men "ministered" for years among the other so-called Kansas City prophets, making false prophecies along with Bickle and Engle, who both praised their personal lives for exemplifying holiness. Where is the discernment here among God's alleged prophets? Are false prophecies and bad doctrine evidence of the new birth? The Cain-Jones-Bickle-Engle cadre give no evidence that any true babies are being born in that maternity ward.

But the most alarming affirmation Dr. Brown gives to his fellow charismatic leaders is his praise of Cindy Jacobs, a self-described prophet to the nations. On his Facebook page, [Brown responded](#) to someone who had offered a critical review of his first *Charismanews* article against John MacArthur. In Brown's response, he writes, in passing, these favorable remarks about Jacobs: "As to your reference to Cindy Jacobs (also a friend of mine with a real love for the Lord), I have no idea where that came from."

My point isn't to quibble about Brown's friendship with Cindy Jacobs or his claim about her "love for the Lord," but in light of what she teaches, his endorsement is hard to justify.

Consider this [10-minute video](#) from her ministry in which she tells her audience that the world is stalked by a spirit named Leviathan. She first claims God gave her this teaching about Leviathan, then proceeds to allegorize Job 41 to build her case.

Jacobs goes on to say that Leviathan is the source of all kinds of strife: divorce, tribal wars, church splits, family feuds, and sibling rivalries. This spirit is particularly active among cultures that worship snakes and crocodiles. In fact, if you are of Native American or Mexican heritage, you are especially susceptible to the influence of the Leviathan spirit and may need to repent of your ancestral animism.

Why would people of Native American ancestry need to repent of pagan sins in which they never participated? Is that another example of what Brown means when he says there are "excesses" that need to be corrected?

Jacobs's "Leviathan" teaching would be bad enough, but in [this video](#) she claims to have fed 3,000 people at a Colorado Springs crusade using just two loaves of bread—the way Jesus fed the 5,000 in John 6:1–14. Her claim to having the same divine attributes of creation that Jesus has is utterly preposterous—and blasphemous. Since Cindy Jacobs is a leader among charismatics, not simply a zealous new convert who needs to be corrected, is Dr. Brown prepared to confront his good friend about her lying blasphemy? We have to wonder what Brown sees in Jacobs's maternity ward. Are there really any babies being born there?

## Babies in the Bathwater

There are many other examples I could mention among charismatic personalities, and John MacArthur is right to identify their antics as blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Sadly, it seems that to Dr. Brown pragmatic, "positive" results (i.e., millions of gullible followers worldwide) justify any means to achieve them—including unbiblical teaching and ungodly shenanigans from leaders who clearly are

not biblically qualified to hold the positions they do. Paul wrote to Titus:

In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:7–8)

If Michael Brown believes false teaching is merely the “mess of the maternity ward”; if he really thinks the culprits are just a few overly excitable individuals who are guilty of slight “excess”; if he truly believes the majority of leading figures in the charismatic movement are innocent of blaspheming or misrepresenting the Holy Spirit; and if he so readily affirms the ministries and teaching of people who regularly issue false prophecies; then he is clearly not discerning.

John MacArthur loves maternity wards, and he understands that babies make messes—sometimes really big messes. But John refuses to leave babies lying for long in that mess. He cares for them, cleaning them with the living water of God’s Word. Dr. Brown would do well to follow John’s example with regard to Bickle, Engle, and Jacobs rather than attack someone who has spent his life as a caring, faithful shepherd of the sheep.

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