

## Benny Hinn

By Justin Peters

**Founded:** Church: Orlando Christian Center of Orlando, Florida, 1983; Benny Hinn Ministries.

**Key Books:** *Good Morning Holy Spirit, Welcome Holy Spirit, The Anointing, Rise and Be Healed, The Miracle of Healing, This Is Your Day For A Miracle, The Blood*

**Mass Media:** *This Is Your Day* daily television program aired on TBN, INSP, Daystar, The God Channel, Revelation TV, Vision TV

**Religious Affiliation:** ordained by the International Convention of Faith Churches and Ministers.

### HISTORY

Benedictus “Benny” Hinn was born on December 3, 1952 in Israel. His family emigrated to Toronto, Canada shortly after 1967 where he attended Georges Vanier Secondary School. Hinn writes, “During my senior year at Georges Vanier, for the second time in my life I had an encounter with the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> School records indicate, that he was an undergraduate in 1972 and dropped out before graduation.

Hinn has given contradictory accounts of his conversion. In a devotional published by the *Praise the Lord* (PTL) network in 1981, he states, “I got saved in Israel in 1968.”<sup>2</sup> In a message delivered in St. Louis in 1983, however, he said, “...it was in Canada that I was born again.”<sup>3</sup> In *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, Hinn relates that he was saved not in 1968 but in February of 1972.<sup>4</sup>

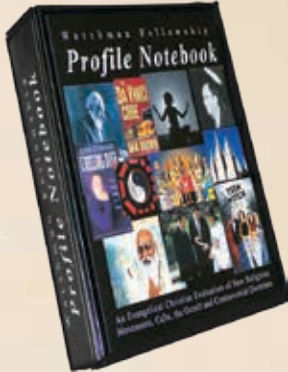
The call to ministry came while attending a Kathryn Khulman crusade. According to Hinn, miracles of healing began to take place all over the auditorium. “I went back to Canada and thought about it. ‘I’m going to try this,’ I said.”<sup>5</sup>

Though Hinn credits numerous people influencing him in his early ministry, none has had a greater impact on him than has Kathryn Khulman (1907-76). Khulman is arguably the world’s most widely recognized female faith healer<sup>6</sup> and was known for her practice of “slaying in the Spirit” and her use of “word of knowledge,” both of which Hinn uses extensively. Their similarities in both attire and technique are striking. Khulman was known for her white dress, Hinn for his white suit. He has copied and perfected many of her mannerisms and phraseology. Though never having met Mrs. Khulman in person, he has stated that she has appeared to him from beyond the grave to give him encouragement and ministerial direction.<sup>7</sup> Hinn has also been an admirer of Dr. Oral Roberts and the two share a close friendship.

Hinn admits no formal biblical training, but claims the Holy Spirit was his biblical instructor. On one occasion of enjoying intense fellowship with and instruction from the Holy Spirit, he was called to supper. As he was about to leave, Hinn claims “[I] felt someone take my hand and say, ‘Five more minutes. Just five more minutes.’ The Holy Spirit longed for my fellowship.”<sup>8</sup> At the time, his anointing was supposedly so strong that others could not even stand up in his presence.<sup>9</sup>

In his early twenties, Hinn moved to Florida and married the daughter of a local pastor. In 1983 he founded a church, the Orlando Christian Center in Orlando, Florida. He was becoming a sought after speaker at venues nationwide and began conducting his miracle crusades in the late 1980’s. His first nationally televised “Miracle Crusade” was held in Flint, MI in 1989. His television program, *This Is Your Day*, began airing in 1990. On his program, Hinn showed video clips of people claiming to have been physically healed at his crusades. Hinn would display discarded crutches and empty wheelchairs on the platform. His fame

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spread and he was soon conducting regular miracle crusades in huge venues around the world.

In 1999, he resigned as pastor of the Orlando Christian Center and moved his headquarters to Grapevine, Texas. *This Is Your Day* is now seen in over 200 countries. The ministry's income is, by some estimates over \$200 million annually.<sup>10</sup> Hinn and his wife, Suzanne, live in the ministry's parsonage valued at approximately \$10 million.

Many of Hinn's claims, teachings, and practices have come under severe scrutiny. He has claimed that he saw a man turn into a snake before his own eyes, that he has video of a man who was raised from the dead, and that he once healed nearly everyone in a hospital.<sup>11</sup> He claims to have seen Jesus with his own eyes, has video of Jesus walking around at one of his meetings as well as video of Jesus' face appearing on the wall of his church. All of these claims have either been proven false, or Hinn has retracted.<sup>12</sup>

One of the biggest controversies is the claim that tens of thousands of people have been physically healed. Hinn explains that there are five stages to his follow-up of people claiming to be healed and all of those healings are medically verified.<sup>13</sup> To the best of this writer's knowledge, there has yet to be one air-tight, documented case of anyone experiencing an organic healing at a Benny Hinn crusade.<sup>14</sup>

## DOCTRINE

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Given that Hinn was influenced by so many differing individuals and views, it is difficult to categorize his doctrine. In recent years, he has placed more emphasis on preaching the Gospel which would technically qualify him as being evangelical. He is also charismatic, believing in the continuation of all of the spiritual gifts. When one considers the totality of his teachings, however, his theology is aligned with the Word-Faith (WF) movement.<sup>15</sup> The WF movement (more commonly referred to as the Health and Wealth, Name It and Claim It, or Prosperity Gospel) is also led by other notable ministers such as Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Jesse Duplantis, Paula White, and Joyce Meyer, among others.

**Spiritual Death of Jesus:** Jesus' physical death was not sufficient to atone for sins but that He also had to die a *spiritual* death in which He suffered, died spiritually, descended to Hell where He was tortured and then reborn.<sup>16</sup> Says Hinn, "He (Jesus) became one with the nature of Satan, so all those who had the nature of Satan can partake of the nature of God."<sup>17</sup>

**Positive Confession:** Spoken words are containers of the substance of faith (hence the name Word-Faith)<sup>18</sup> and believers can use their own words to speak things into existence. Hinn claims he learned this principle from a witch when she told him that she could bring disease on men and kill birds with her words.<sup>19</sup> Says Hinn, "I know, that I know, that I know, that as these programs are airing, I'm speaking something into existence."<sup>20</sup>

**Little gods Doctrine:** WF theology holds that Adam was created to be an *exact duplicate* of God.<sup>21</sup> The proof text is Genesis 1:26-27 which records that man was created in God's image. The little gods doctrine is a key reason that the WF preachers hold so tenaciously to health and wealth - because believers are "gods" and a god cannot be poor, nor sick. Though Hinn has enthusiastically taught this doctrine for much of his ministry,<sup>22</sup> recently, he has stopped emphasizing it.

**Divine Revelation Knowledge:** God is dispensing extra-biblical knowledge about Himself and His plans today. Claiming divine revelation knowledge, Hinn has taught that women were originally designed to give birth out of their sides,<sup>23</sup> that when believers partake of communion they are partaking of Christ Himself,<sup>24</sup> and that there are nine members of the Godhead.<sup>25</sup> It is common to see Him assert divine inspiration for calling out people to be healed of various diseases.<sup>26</sup> In 1999 Hinn claimed God told him to build a "World Healing Center." Funds were collected for the \$30 million project, construction of which was to begin immediately. In February of 2000, however, God apparently changed His mind and told Hinn that the timing was wrong and that he should wait.<sup>27</sup> As of this writing, ground for the World Healing Center has yet to be broken.

**Prophecy:** Hinn has offered numerous prophecies over the years, claiming divine inspiration. On October 19, 1999 Hinn prophesied that people would soon be placing their deceased loved ones "by the thousands" in front of televisions tuned to TBN and that they

would be raised from the dead.<sup>28</sup> Once he prophesied that there “will not be one Muslim left in Nigeria” by the year 2003.<sup>29</sup> One of the most famous prophecies was recorded on December 31, 1989. Hinn says he slipped into a trance-like state in which God began to give him prophecies about major events that were to occur in the then upcoming decade of the 1990’s. Some of the prophecies were that America’s east coast would be ravaged by earthquakes, a female president would be in the White House, the economy of the U.S. would collapse, Fidel Castro would die and that God would destroy the homosexual community in America with fire.<sup>30</sup>

**Healing:** Unquestionably, it is the gift of physical healing for which Benny Hinn is best known. Like all proponents of WF theology, Hinn teaches that it is *always* God’s will for a person to be physically healed provided that he has enough faith. Says Hinn, “He promises to heal all, everyone – any, any whatsoever, everything – all our diseases. That means not even a headache, sinus problem, not even a toothache – nothing! No sickness should come your way, God heals all your diseases.”<sup>31</sup>

Foundational to Hinn’s teaching that physical healing is guaranteed is that physical healing is provided for in the Atonement. WF teachers use Isaiah 53:5 as their biblical support. In 2007, Hinn said,

...He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, chastised for peace. That’s right, that’s the *front* of the cross. But I’ve come to remind you there’s the back side of the cross – with His stripes *we are healed!* That’s definite, that’s the Bible! ...The Gospel of the kingdom is the Gospel of salvation and the Gospel of healing. It’s one Gospel. ...If we give the church of Jesus Christ only half the message, we are robbing them of 50% (of the Gospel).<sup>32</sup>

Hinn teaches that a person must believe that his healing is not a matter of if, but *when*. Says Hinn, “Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, ‘If it be thy will.’ Don’t allow such faith destroying words to be spoken from your mouth.”<sup>33</sup> In 2003, Hinn said, “If you sit there and say ‘I’m not sure,’ you just lost it (healing).”<sup>34</sup>

## **BIBLICAL RESPONSE**

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It is important to remember that most false teachers do present some truth in what they teach. Satan disguises himself as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) and false prophets and teachers will “secretly introduce destructive heresies”(2 Pet. 2:1-3). False teachers will have some truth, but that truth will always be mixed with error and heresy. True Christians will normally recognize that the teachings of religions such as Buddhism or Islam are false. However, the false doctrines discussed in this *Profile* are often able to slip by Christians undetected because there is solid agreement in many other areas with WF teachers (deity of Christ, Trinity, virgin birth etc.). The result is that many Christians accept this profoundly dangerous teaching that would normally be rejected.

**Spiritual Death of Jesus:** Hinn’s teaching on salvation is relatively sound and it is possible that someone could get saved from hearing him present the Gospel. However, the “Spiritual Death of Jesus” doctrine is heretical and Hinn continues to teach it. If Jesus died spiritually, then He ceased to be God. If Jesus ceased to be God – even for an instant – then He never was God to begin with because God cannot cease being God. He is immutable, meaning He does not change (Heb. 13:8). The Bible is very clear that it was the *physical* death of Jesus that paid for our sins (1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7). His work was completed on the cross, not in Hell.

**Positive Confession:** Faith is not a literal, tangible substance. The power to create by speaking words rests solely with God (Gen. 1, 2; Col. 1:16) and the crisp line between Creator and created should not be blurred. The Faith preachers often appeal to Hebrews 11:1: “faith is the substance of things hoped for...” The word “substance,” however, is more properly rendered as *assurance*. Hence, faith provides the believer the assurance of the “things hoped for.” In context, the “things hoped for” are God’s promises of Christ’s coming (Heb. 10:37) and salvation (10:38-39).

**Little gods Doctrine:** When the Bible states that God created man in His image (Gen. 1:26-27), that means we as humans have the capacity *through* a saving relationship with Jesus Christ to *know* God. This does not, however, mean that we *are* God. There is only *one* God (Ex. 20:3; Isa. 44:8; Psa. 50:1; Rom. 16:27; Eph. 4:6).

**Divine Revelation Knowledge:** Hebrews 1:1-2 states that “God...in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” Everything that God has to say about His character and His nature He has said in Jesus Christ. Legion are the false religions that have begun by a single individual saying, “God spoke to me.” So began Mormonism and Islam. It is exceedingly dangerous to claim extra-biblical revelation from God.

**Prophecy:** Sadly, Benny Hinn meets every biblical criterion as to how to discern a false prophet (Jer. 23:14; Deut. 18:21-22). No verifiable prophecies of Hinn’s have been fulfilled and his false prophecies are numerous.

**Healing:** This touches all of us. We either need healing ourselves (or one day will), or we have a loved one who does. Hence, it is crucial to understand that it is not *always* God’s will for a person to be physically healed in this life. It is a matter of biblical record that not everyone who loved and served the Lord walked in perfect health. Moses (Ex. 4:11), Job, Elisha (2 Kings 13:14), Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23) and the Apostle Paul (Gal. 4:13-14) are just a few examples. This writer certainly believes that God still heals today, but it is not *always* God’s will *this* side of Heaven.

Regarding the Atonement, Hinn is missing the primary point of Isaiah 53:5. The primary context is not *physical* healing, it is *spiritual* healing – healing from sin. Note the words “transgressions” and “iniquities.” Is Hinn right, though, when he and the other WF preachers teach that physical healing is provided for in the Atonement? Actually, yes. Sickness is one of the consequences of living in a fallen world. Therefore, when Jesus died and paid for sins, He also paid for the consequences of those sins, one of which is sickness and disease. Here, however, is where Hinn and the others are wrong: Not all of the benefits of the Atonement are promised to be fully realized this side of Heaven. Physical healing is one of those benefits. A glorified body is also provided for in the Atonement, but after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:42-44). The technical term for the error the WF preachers make is an *over-realized eschatology*.

#### Notes

- 1 Benny Hinn, *Good Morning Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 28.
- 2 Benny Hinn, *The PTL Family Devotional* (PTL Network, 1981) as cited in Richard Fisher and Kurt Goedelman, *The Confusing Word of Benny Hinn* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishers, 2001), 42.
- 3 Benny Hinn, “*Benny Hinn Testimony*” audiotope (St. Louis: Grace World Outreach, March 4, 1983).
- 4 Hinn, *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, 27-32.
- 5 Benny Hinn, *The Anointing* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 52.
- 6 Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard Van Der Maas, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 826.
- 7 Benny Hinn, “Benny Hinn Miracle Crusade” (Honolulu, HI, 1997, 28 February) and Hinn, *This Is Your Day* (Television broadcast, June 11, 1997).
- 8 Hinn, *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, 56.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 10 *Do You Believe in Miracles?*, Produced by Oleh Rumak. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *A Call for Discernment*, disc 2 “Mangled Manifestations,” Produced by Justin Peters. Vicksburg, MS: Justin Peters Productions, 2009.
- 13 Rumak, *Do You Believe in Miracles?*, CBC, 2004. This documentary followed up with five people who Hinn claimed to be healed at recent crusades and none of the five were, in fact, healed. One woman got worse and another died soon afterwards of the cancer from which she had supposedly just been healed.
- 14 Justin Peters, *A Call for Discernment*, disc 2 “The Hurt of Healing,” (Justin Peters Ministries, 2009). It is important to note the difference between a psycho-somatic healing and an organic healing. The former is actually quite common.
- 15 See Watchman Fellowship’s *Profile* on the *Word-Faith Movement* by Rob Bowman.
- 16 The SDJ doctrine was first clearly articulated by Essek W. Kenyon who many believe to be the grandfather of the modern Word of Faith movement. See E.W. Kenyon, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne* (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon’s Gospel Publishing Society, 1969). All of the modern WF preachers hold to this doctrine to one degree or another.
- 17 Benny Hinn, “Benny Hinn” program on TBN (December 15, 1990).
- 18 Charles Capps, a leading WF proponent writes, “Some think that God made the earth out of nothing, but He didn’t. He made it out of something. The substance God used was faith...He used His words as a carrier of that faith.” Capps, *Authority in Three Worlds* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1982), 24.
- 19 Benny Hinn, “Praise the Lord” program on TBN (1989, 1 June).
- 20 Hinn makes this statement on a video clip, reproduced on Peters, *A Call for Discernment*, disc 1 “Dangerous Doctrines.”
- 21 Many of the faith preachers such as Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth HaginCreflo teach this doctrine. For more information, see Robert Bowman, *The Word-Faith Controversy* (Grand Rapids, MN: Baker Books, 2001) chapter 9.
- 22 See: Justin Peters, *An Examination and Critique of the Life, Ministry and Theology of Healing Evangelist Benny Hinn*. Master’s thesis submitted to the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Master’s of Theology degree. December 2002, 20-23.
- 23 Peters, *A Call for Discernment*, disc 2 “Mangled Manifestations.”
- 24 Benny Hinn, “Praise the Lord” program on TBN (December 27, 1994).
- 25 Benny Hinn, sermon “A New Spirit” delivered to the Orlando Christian Center, aired on TBN (1990, 13 October).
- 26 It is noteworthy that while Hinn claims that God shows him people with specific diseases such as cancer, heart disease, fibromyalgia, etc. being healed, God never gives him the individuals’ specific names or hometowns.
- 27 Steve McGonigle, “Whatever happened to Hinn’s promised healing center?,” *The Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 2002.
- 28 Benny Hinn, “Praise the Lord” show on TBN (1999, 19 October).
- 29 Peters, *An Examination and Critique of the Life, Ministry and Theology of Healing Evangelist Benny Hinn*, 40.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 36-38. Audio clip on file. May be heard on Peters, *A Call for Discernment*, disc 2 “Mangled Manifestations.”
- 31 Benny Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 32.
- 32 Benny Hinn, *Miracle Crusade* in Singapore, 2007, clip on file.
- 33 Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 47.
- 34 Peters, *A Call for Discernment*, disc 3 “The Hurt of Healing.”



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