

MorningStar Ministries

By Keith Gibson

Founder: Rick & Julie Joyner

Founding Date: 1985

Organizational Structure: Rick Joyner is the primary leader of this ministry. He is the Founder and Executive Director of MorningStar Ministries and Heritage International Ministries, the Senior Pastor of MorningStar Fellowship Church and the Director of Morningstar University. He has also authored more than 40 books.

Unique Activities: Apostolic and Prophetic councils and roundtables. ZAO Life Project to provide wells and clean drinking water to third world areas. The Nehemiah Project which is aimed at restoring much of what was formerly known as Heritage USA. Rick Joyner also has continued participation in the Knights of Malta which has been viewed as controversial by many. He has also been involved in some high profile ministry restorations, including most recently that of Todd Bentley.

Unique slogans: The tree of knowledge, Jezebel spirit, religious spirit

HISTORY

As with many ministries, the history of MorningStar Publications and Ministries is inextricably connected to the history of its founder Rick Joyner. MorningStar does not publish detailed accounts of its history and therefore a complete picture is difficult to piece together based on the available information.

Rick Joyner states that he was converted to Jesus Christ in 1971.¹ He indicates that he immediately began to have prophetic experiences in which he could foresee events and occasionally look at people and know details about them such as spiritual problems or callings on their lives.² He was “thrust into the ministry” very quickly after being a believer for only two years and began to pastor a church.³ Joyner indicates that he failed badly in this attempt and left the pastoral ministry in 1980. He was still being asked to speak in other churches at this time and his personal ministry continued to grow.⁴ He was called by God to return to full-time ministry in 1982 but did not return due to feelings of inadequacy. Joyner states that he essentially drifted from the Lord for the next 5 years.⁵

During this period Joyner took a job flying corporate aircraft. He started an aircraft charter business with a friend, “Doc Hughes” which grew quickly. This left him little time for the Lord or for studies.⁶

In 1987 Joyner indicates that he was called back into the ministry by the Lord and told that his commission would be given to another if he did not respond at that time.⁷ Joyner indicates that he had already written and published his first book, *There Were Two Trees in the Garden*, by this time. He had also already begun MorningStar Publications in order to keep control over his book’s content and possibly with the thought of publishing a few other books.⁸ This of course means that the book was written and the ministry was founded during Joyner’s five years spent “wandering from the Lord”.

Joyner indicates that he placed his business on the altar before the Lord. Within thirty days the business was falling apart. It would ultimately end up in bankruptcy.⁹ Immediately following this, he wrote a prophecy entitled, *A Vision of the Harvest*, which is the record of a prophecy given to him during a two and a half day prophetic experience. He initially sent this word to only 100 people who were on a mailing list from his ministry. Within weeks requests

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were coming in to reprint the vision and requests for him to speak came in from all over the world.¹⁰

It was not long after these events that the ministry moved to Charlotte, North Carolina where it spent seven years. Then it moved to Moravian Falls, North Carolina for an additional seven years before returning to Charlotte. In the early days of the move, Joyner began to meet and affiliate with other key leaders in the modern apostolic and prophetic movement such as Mike Bickle,¹¹ James Goll, Bob Jones, Jack Deere and many others.¹² The ministry has continued to increase in size and influence from that point. One other pivotal occurrence was the publishing of Joyner's most influential and bestselling book, *The Final Quest*, in 1996.

DOCTRINE

The formal doctrinal statement found on the website for MorningStar Ministries is relatively standard among Charismatic Evangelical Christianity. However, even here, there are a couple of oddities. The most notable is to be found under a section entitled, *On the Purpose of Faith*. There one reads, "God's purpose in requiring faith for salvation is to raise our focus and concentration above the temporal to the One who is eternal."¹³ Readers can begin to get a feel for Joyner's tendency toward esoteric speech and thought. More importantly however, this statement would seem to be in contradiction to the Bible's own teaching on this subject. Scripture indicates that it is by faith in order that it might be of grace (Romans 4 especially verse 16). In other words, God's promises are received by faith so that there is no element of human merit involved not in order to "raise our focus and concentration". At best, this statement by the ministry is unnecessary and confusing.

But the larger issues with MorningStar Ministries are found in writings other than the doctrinal statement. In fact, many of Joyner's own writings are in contradiction to the ministry's formal doctrinal statement, either directly or indirectly.

Scripture: The official statement says, "We believe in the Divine inspiration and authority of the 66 books of the Holy Bible as the complete canon of God's testimony to mankind. We are committed to esteeming Scripture as the very Word of God, inerrant in its original form. We do not accept any doctrine which contradicts Scripture." This statement is orthodox. But compare this statement to those made by Rick Joyner elsewhere.

Writing on the topic of revelation, Joyner indicates that there are four levels of inspiration. The higher the level of revelation, the higher the level of confidence one can have that the word is actually from God. Alarming however, Joyner indicates his belief that the New Testament epistles were only written at the second level of inspiration. He states,

The next level of inspiration is a conscious sense of the presence of the Lord, or the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which gives special illumination to our minds. This often comes when I am writing, or speaking, and it gives me much greater confidence in the importance or accuracy of what I am saying. I believe that this was probably experienced by the apostles as they wrote the New Testament epistles. This will give us great confidence, but it is still a level where we can still be influenced by our prejudices, doctrines, etc.¹⁴

Later in the same book Joyner indicates that he wrote *The Final Quest* from levels of inspiration that are higher than that from which the epistles were penned. He states, "The visions contained in this book all began with a dream. Some of it came under a very intense sense of the presence of the Lord, but the overwhelming majority was received in some level of a trance."¹⁵ Elsewhere in *The Final Quest*, Joyner relates an experience that he allegedly had while being caught up to heaven. He states that he met with the apostle Paul who told him,

The foundation stones were laid by Jesus, alone. My life and ministry are not the example of what you are called to be. Jesus alone is that. If what I have written is used as a foundation, it will not be able to hold the weight of that which needs to be built upon it. What I have written must be built upon the only Foundation that can withstand what you are about to endure; it must not be used as the foundation. You must see my teachings through the Lord's teachings, not try to understand Him from my perspective. His words are the foundation. I have only built upon them by elaborating on His words. The greatest wisdom, and the most powerful truths, are His words, not mine.¹⁶

In a different book, Joyner discusses his belief that new covenant prophets can give errant prophecies yet still be considered true prophets of God (a belief common within the prophetic movement). In order to bolster his claim he states the following, “No prophet is infallible, which is why new covenant prophecy must be judged. There are even cases where old covenant prophets missed a prediction or prophecy, but were still acknowledged as prophets by the Lord.”¹⁷

Jesus: The official statement of faith contains the following statement, “The resurrection of Jesus' physical body after His crucifixion was literal, as will be the resurrection of both the just and the unjust on the Day of Judgment.” This statement is completely orthodox in what it affirms. But, once again, compare this statement with one given elsewhere by Rick Joyner: “There is a tendency to continue relating to Him as ‘**the MAN from Galilee.**’ Jesus is not a man. He was and is Spirit. He took the **form** of a servant and became a man for a brief time”¹⁸ (emphasis in the original).

In his book which he claims is a revelation he was given about the incarnation, Joyner states the following concerning Christ, “He is no longer Jesus of Nazareth, but He is the Lord of glory above all rule, authority, dominion, and power. Even so, there is something about the life He lived on earth and the cross that He endured which will forever be the greatest revelation of His nature—who He is.”¹⁹ This statement is clearly important in Joyner’s mind because he repeats a shortened version of it just a few pages later stating, “He is no longer Jesus of Nazareth, but He is the Lord of glory!”²⁰ Further, he seems to indicate that this miracle is, in some way, reproduced in believers. He writes, “If this book achieves its purpose, it will impart a greater devotion to pursue a deeper understanding of this greatest of all events—how God became a man and lived upon the earth, and how He is still becoming man and walking on the earth through us.”²¹

The Fall: The official doctrinal statement states the following concerning the Fall, “The first man, Adam, transgressed the command of God, and as God had warned, the process of death entered him and all of his descendants because of that transgression.” Again, this statement is solidly orthodox. But notice what Joyner states about the Fall in the following quote,

The Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life are symbolic of two spiritual lineages, or ‘family trees.’ The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation is a history of two lineages. Understanding the lineages can help us to understand the most common errors besetting the human race, including the church.

Satan did not tempt Eve with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge just because the Lord had made it taboo. He tempted her with it because the source of his power was rooted in that tree. Furthermore, the Lord did not make it taboo just to test His children; He prohibited the eating of its fruit because He knew it was poison....It was not just man’s disobedience that brought death to earth; it was also the fruit from this tree.²²

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Scripture: Joyner’s understanding of revelation is truly concerning, especially in light of the fact that he places the epistles in only the second level of inspiration. In the first place, Joyner indicates that at this second level of inspiration one can still be influenced by one’s own “prejudices, doctrines, etc.” Whether intentionally or not, Joyner has completely undermined the doctrine of inerrancy with regard to the New Testament epistles for it is conceivable that there are parts written from the author’s own prejudice. Further, since Joyner indicates that he experiences this level of inspiration “often”, one would have to conclude that Joyner’s words given under this level of revelation would at least be as authoritative as the New Testament epistles. But even more alarming is the claim that his book, *The Final Quest*, was written from the two highest levels of inspiration. If Joyner is correct, then his words must be considered as carrying more authority than the words of Paul and the rest of the authors of the epistles for Joyner is claiming a higher level of revelation for them.

The statement, supposedly by Paul, that his writings cannot be used as a foundation is also very concerning as it would seem to place the epistles on a different, lower, level of

authority than the gospels. This would mean that all parts of the Scriptures are not equally inspired.

Jesus: Joyner's statements concerning the nature of Jesus are also heretical. The statement by Joyner that Jesus became man "for a brief time", would appear to be a denial of what is known as the "hypostatic union", the understanding that when the Son of God took to Himself the form of a servant, this was a permanent union. He is forever the God-man, fully God and fully man. Jesus did not temporarily become man for a time.

The Fall: Joyner's comments on the Tree of Knowledge and the Fall of Man are also very problematic. He indicates that it was not Adam's disobedience alone that brought the Fall but the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. With this statement, Joyner departs from orthodoxy and is in contradiction with Scripture which states, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..." (Rom. 5:12). No mention of the Tree of Knowledge.

Prophets: MorningStar's belief that true prophets of God can give errant prophecies is a serious problem. Despite the popularity of this theory, the Bible never makes this statement. There is an immediacy to the prophetic word that is to protect it from being corrupted by the prophet himself. According to Deuteronomy 18, a prophet who gives a prophetic word that fails to come to pass is a false prophet. Joyner's doctrine of fallible prophets places a stumblingblock in the way of those seeking to be obedient to those attempting to follow the Biblical admonition to test prophets. Rick Joyner publishes multiple prophetic words every week and, it can be argued, personal revelation is the true foundation for the ministry. Documentation abounds of errant prophetic words given by Rick Joyner.²³ This creates tremendous problems for those looking to him as a prophetic voice.

Summary: MorningStar Ministries should, at best, be considered aberrant in its theology despite the formal doctrinal statement. The doctrines actually taught do not line up with that which is professed in the official statement. The false doctrines in this movement include doctrines that are a part of the central tenants of the Christian faith. This ministry should be avoided.

Notes

- ¹ Rick Joyner, *A Prophetic Vision for the 21st Century*, (Nashville, TN; Thomas Nelson, 1999) 3.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Rick Joyner, *A Prophetic History*, MorningStar Journal Vol. 18, No.1. The article cited in full at www.triunelastdays.org/articles-2/a-prophetic-history.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ *A Prophetic Vision*, 4.
- ⁶ *A Prophetic History*.
- ⁷ *A Prophetic Vision*, 4.
- ⁸ Ibid both previous sources.
- ⁹ *A Prophetic History*.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ A separate 4-page *Profile* has been published on Mike Bickle and his organization: Keith Gibson, "IHOP," *Profile Notebook* (Arlington, Texas: Watchman Fellowship, Inc. 1994-2012). A complete *Profile Notebook* (over 400 pages) is available at www.watchman.org/notebook.htm.
- ¹² Rick Joyner, *A Prophetic History Part II*, Triune Last Days, www.triunelastdays.org/articles-2/a-prophetic-history-part-ii accessed March 12, 2012).
- ¹³ Morningstar Ministries, *MorningStar Ministries Statement of Faith*, www.morningstarministries.org/about/statement-faith (accessed March 12, 2012).
- ¹⁴ Rick Joyner, *The Final Quest*, (New Kensington, PA; Whitaker House, 1996) 10.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 11.
- ¹⁶ *Final Quest*, 134.
- ¹⁷ *A Prophetic Vision*, 241. Joyner suggests that Jonah Isaiah and Elijah made prophecies that failed to come to pass. These situations were entirely different than the failed predictions of Joyner. In the Biblical examples, the prophesied judgment was abated due to repentance.
- ¹⁸ Rick Joyner, *There were Two Trees in the Garden*, (New Kensington, PA; Whitaker House, 1992) page 59.
- ¹⁹ Rick Joyner, *When God Walked the Earth*, (Fort Mill, SC; Morningstar Publications, 2007) Kindle edition. This quote is found in the introduction.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Rick Joyner, *There Were Two Trees in the Garden*, (Charlotte, NC; MorningStar Publications, 1986) 1. This book is particularly important because Joyner has stated that many people still consider it to be his best book.
- ²³ A brief internet search will confirm this statement. However, as an example of Joyner's errant prophecies, one merely needs to consider his prophecy in 1997 that California would be destroyed in 9 months. This prophecy is documented in an article by Cedric Hawkins entitled, "God's Lightning Rod" published by Charisma Magazine in April 2001.



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