

The 900 Foot Jesus



Good morning, y'all. Well, we're getting some much needed rain today. Thank you Baby Jesus. Sometimes when I get all touchy-feely during rainstorms I recall the words to the song "Raindrops" by Dee Clark. After my emotional outburst from last night I guess I'm feeling a little tender, and the song won't leave my head.

Speaking of feeling a little tender, Mulva reports that the Right Reverend Dale E. Bread has not deemed himself to be fit to be the star attraction at The Full Gospel Original Church of God, yet. A traveling minister, Reverend Evan Elpus, was brought in to handle the altar call and the main feature. Mulva says everyone misses Old Ben, who has not been seen since the incident. It seems that folks don't seem to appreciate a group of copperheads and water moccasins like they do an eight foot timber rattler. I suggested bringing in a Coral snake to add a little color, but Mulva declined to pass on my suggestion. I guess the congregation is going to have a "wait and see attitude" with regard to the Reverend Bread. Since I'm expressing emotions today with songs, I'll throw out "Once Bitten Twice Shy", by Great White. I don't know that the Reverend Bread listens to 80's "hair bands", but he might see the humor. Maybe not.

All of this talk about preachers puts me in mind of one of the most successful pastors of all time, Oral Roberts. Speaking of waxing eloquently, Oral lived up to his name. He could spin a tale with the best of them. He'd have you "walking down the garden path", as they say in the sales biz, and be so convinced everything was true you'd be picking daisies along the way. As you remember, my Daddy, Bocephus Lite, was one of the great salesmen of all time. Daddy paid particular attention to preachers, particularly televangelists, and would hoot out loud when one of them would spin a particularly convincing yarn.

Daddy use to call preachers "air salesman". He'd say, "look at what they're selling, is there a product you get to take home with you"?, "Is there even a piece of paper that

signifies you own something like land or stocks"? "No, there's nothing!", "For ten percent of your life's earnings you're given a promise that when you die you'll be given a place in this magical land that no one has ever seen!" He'd finish up with, "Now that's salesmanship I tell you!" After I got older I'd finish up Daddy's rant for him with, "And no one's ever come back and asked for a refund!" For which I'd get an "attaboy" and we'd enjoy a moment for a little while.

How this relates to Oral Roberts is this; one Sunday morning when my days and night's were confused I was watching Oral on the TV when out of the blue he started going on about a 900 foot Jesus he'd seen while driving around Tulsa, Oklahoma. Now, Oral related that Jesus was at least 900 feet tall because he was taller than some other local landmark that Oral named that I can't remember. It seems that the Lord can not be intimidated by any man made structure and so he appeared to Oral as something larger. Well, my mind is racing and I start yelling for everyone to wake up and gather round 'cause old Oral has finally gone off his nut and is coming unglued on national TV. Oral continued with his dissertation and relates that Jesus spoke to Oral through his car radio, and I go, "good catch". I was already thinking that a 900 foot Jesus would belt out a pretty loud tune if asked to sing, so any message He uttered would not be a secret. Oral covered his bases and went on to relate that Jesus told him to build a gigantic, humongous, super-sized medical center there in Tulsa and that the Doctors would all have to believe in faith based healing.

Well, Oral needed big bucks for this endeavor and the faithful ponied up with a boatload of money. At a later date Oral told the faithful that God had given him an ultimatum, that if Oral couldn't come up with the big bucks by the end of the year then Oral would be "called home". The faithful dug deep and came up with 9 million reasons to keep Oral on this mortal coil. Not long after that the "City of Faith" closed its doors. Something about doctors and the AMA not wanting to give all of the credit for a successful operation to the Lord. Go figure.

After assorted lawsuits for misappropriation of funds, Oral's income declined from an estimated high of \$88 million in 1980 to \$55 million in 1986. Not bad for an "air salesman".

As we conclude this Sunday's service please remember to take your coats and umbrellas from the vestry as you leave. And please remember, take only **your** coats and umbrellas.

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