



STATEMENT DR170

Oral Roberts Creates Media Stir With Latest Revelation

Oral Roberts's latest alleged revelation from God has caused a great deal of controversy both in and out of the Christian church. On his program "Expect a Miracle" of January 4, Roberts claimed that unless he received \$4.5 million for scholarships at **Oral Roberts University Medical School**, God would take him home by March.

According to Roberts, the money will be used to provide full scholarships for medical missionaries who will later be sent to Third World nations. Roberts said that in March of 1986 God ordered him to raise \$8 million for scholarships, and if he failed in his mission "God would take him home in one year." The televangelist said that \$3.5 million has already been raised, but urged his supporters to extend his life by providing the remaining \$4.5 million before March.

This dramatic fund raising technique is just the latest of many peculiar revelations that have proceeded from the mouth of Oral Roberts, including a vision of a 900-foot Jesus standing next to his 60-story medical complex, the revelation that the Lord would not give us a cure for cancer unless each one of us sends Oral \$240, and his statement to a group of local businessmen in Tulsa that he was in danger of losing his soul if he did not finish his \$250 million City of Faith Medical and Research Center located in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Roberts, 68, has been a television evangelist for more than thirty years, and his present weekly program is carried on more than 200 stations across the country.

Following the controversial do-or-die statements by Roberts, ten of the stations that carry the program threatened to edit any additional comments about giving money in order to preserve Roberts' life. The vice-president for programming of KHJ-TV Los Angeles stated: "If he repeats his claim, it will be edited out." The director of broadcast operations for WUSA-TV in Washington, D.C., affirmed that they would not carry the broadcast because it was "nothing but 30 minutes of fund raising."

In the midst of controversy concerning his claim and the dramatic plea for funds, Roberts withdrew the television program that started the controversy. A spokesperson for Oral Roberts Ministries said that the televangelist literally believed he would die if the money was not raised by March of this year. The Oral Roberts organization also revealed that they received about \$1.6 million in donations and pledges in the two weeks following his plea for funds.

Roberts has been unavailable for comments concerning his claim on national television, but his son and fellow evangelist, Richard Roberts, has appeared on several television shows in defense of his father's claim. In response to a criticism of his father, Richard Roberts said, "These people think we're out of our minds. Well, we are out of our minds—and into our spirits."

Individuals who attended a morning chapel service in April of 1986 stated that Roberts informed those in attendance that God told him he would die if he did not succeed in sending out missionaries by the end of 1986.

In the midst of controversy concerning his claim and the variation in dates, Roberts recently stated that the devil appeared in his home and began choking him, and that he was rescued only when his wife entered the room and rebuked the devil. Christian criticisms of Roberts's revelation were succinctly summarized in a Tulsa *Tribune* editorial which stated that Roberts's depiction of a "petty, vengeful or idiotic God" is "close to sacrilege." — *Ken Samples*

LATE NEWS

A recent development would make it appear that Roberts reached his goal of \$8 million by the end of March. A Florida racetrack owner, Jerry Collins, donated \$1.3 million to Oral Roberts University (received March 23) in support of the medical missionaries. Collins, a former state senator, said he was unconcerned with Roberts's do-or-die plea, but donated the money in support of education. "I think he needs psychiatric treatment," said Collins about Roberts, but "to be sure, he doesn't have to commit hari-kari now." Upon receiving the check for \$1.3 million, Richard Roberts commented: "This is a landmark day in the history of Oral Roberts University."

LKL