

Beware of the Latest New Age Deception

It's not surprising to find a New Age guru in the nation of Sri Lanka. But when that same guru mixes Christian faith, the Lord's Supper and prophetic revelation with New Age teachings, you can understand why church leaders around the world are concerned.

The man at the center of this controversy is Kirby de Lanerolle, 44, a Sri Lankan who says he was raised in the Methodist Church. Today he leads WOW Life Church in the capital city of Colombo. (WOW stands for "Works of Wonder.") His growing crowd of followers say his ministry is accompanied by unusual miracles including instant weight loss, gray hair turning black, gold dust and cash appearing supernaturally in wallets.

But de Lanerolle's trademark is his revelation of "breatherianism"—the belief that humans don't need food to exist. Basing his ideas on ancient Eastern philosophy, de Lanerolle believes he receives most of his nutrition from vibrations of energy as well as sunlight. He also takes daily Communion, and claims that Jesus was a breatharian because He fasted for 40 days.

De Lanerolle's teachings obviously appeal to people who struggle with their weight—and this may explain why he's gaining popularity in the United States. De Lanerolle claims to be able to "impart" to others the ability to tap into spiritual vibrations so they lose their appetite for food.

"Jesus said man does not live by bread alone," de Lanerolle says in one of his video teachings on YouTube, "but by every vibration frequency of God." He calls Holy Communion a "superfood" and claims that he once ran a half marathon after

fasting for two months.

Making things even weirder, de Lanerolle teaches what is known as “immortality on earth,” the belief that humans can live forever. He claims to have secret revelation about this concept, and he draws his inspiration from the teachings of a controversial charismatic preacher named Kobus van Rensburg of South Africa. (Ironically, van Rensburg died of cancer in 2013. He was directly tied to the controversial Nigerian minister T.B. Joshua.)

De Lanerolle does not expect to keep his unusual brand of spirituality in Sri Lanka. He is spreading it abroad, and he will lead a five-day retreat on breatherianism in Missouri in September. He is now also linked to some leaders in the charismatic revival stream, and he is scheduled to speak at a charismatic conference in Pennsylvania this fall.

Some Christian leaders in India issued a warning about de Lanerolle back in 2015 after he visited Bangalore and Chennai. “We are of the opinion that since Kirby’s teachings are clearly not in line with the word of truth; he ... has to be evaluated not on the basis of the signs and wonders but on the basis of the doctrine he believes in and teaches,” said Jeyakaran Emmanuel, a spokesman for a coalition of Indian pastors known as the Grace and Truth Coalition.

“Kirby may be a sincere follower of Christ, but he is sincerely wrong in such unbiblical teachings such as immortality on earth and breatharianism,” Emmanuel said.

Most thinking people would agree it’s dangerous to teach that food isn’t necessary. That alone could be the foundation for a Jim Jones-style cult. But de Lannerole also teaches universalism (“All religions point to one place,” he has said) and that human beings are evolving into gods. In one of his recorded messages, he says, “We are all in the process of evolution. I believe in evolution. We are all in the process

of evolution into being God Himself.”

Pastor Ivor Poobalan of the Kollupitiya Methodist Church in Sri Lanka preached a bold message in July 2019 about the spread of heresy in the modern church. In a sermon posted online, he warns his members about de Lanerolle’s strange teachings and laments that pastors of 500 Sri Lankan churches have come under the “covering” of WOW Life Church, which now claims to be the largest denomination in the country.

“Some years ago, Kirby claimed that God sent angels to reset his DNA and made his body capable of living without food,” Pastor Poobalan says. “This has now led to the most reckless teaching that is central to WOW Life, the promise of immortality on earth. The followers are now promised that they are the first generation of Christians that will physically live on and not die until Jesus returns in the future.”

How can someone with such strange, unbiblical beliefs be welcomed into a Christian conference? It’s obvious that discernment in the church today is at a low point. In many charismatic circles today, we chase after anyone who can perform miracles—no matter how bizarre. We’ve lost the ability to spot an impostor.

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians about “false apostles” and “deceitful workers” who “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (see 2 Cor. 11:13,15, NASB). Paul was willing to mark such men as dangerous instruments of Satan. Today we are too nice to judge. We give the false prophets a microphone and pay them an honorarium.

Satan is busy trying to unleash a new wave of deception in the church. Don’t buy it. Please warn your friends not to expose themselves to Kirby de Lanerolle’s teachings—or to anyone who spreads similar New Age doctrines designed to turn people’s hearts away from Jesus. {eoa}