



*"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16*

## The Healer: Dr. John Graham Lake

Editor's Note: The following biography of Dr. Lake is taken from *Let Light Shine Out: The Story of The Assemblies of God in the Pacific Northwest* by Ward M. Tannenburg, Ph.D

The man who Gordon Lindsay declared was, in his opinion, "the greatest missionary that has appeared since the period of the early Church," was also a man who profoundly impacted the Northwest District with the message - even though he himself was never a member of the Assemblies of God. His name was John G. Lake. John Graham Lake was born at St. Mary's, Ontario, Canada, on March 18, 1870. When yet a small boy, he accompanied his parents to the United States, settling at Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan.

I am familiar with St. Mary's. It is a quaint country town of big trees with it's main street going up a steep hill. A huge Catholic Cathedral with an impressive spire is on another hill. St. Mary's is famed for it's huge deep swimming pool within a small limestone quarry. Stone quarrying and cement making by the large plant of "The St. Mary's Cement Co." still uses the local limestone. The town has a great number of period homes that are built from stone and brick, with great steep roofs of slate. I was doing roofing at the time, (1974) so we had a contract to repair some of them because some of the original square iron nails had rusted away. Some slate was eroded by freeze and thaw, but most of it was still excellent, even after a full century. It is in the prosperous country north of London, Ontario, getting over toward Stratford, which is internationally famed for it's Shakespearean Theatre. TP

In October 1891, he was admitted in the Methodist ministry in Chicago and appointed to a church in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. He finally decided against going there and instead went into the newspaper business. In the town of Harvey, Illinois, he founded the *Harvey Citizen*. (This town was named after D. L. Moody's brother in law)

In February 1893, at age twenty-one, he married Miss Jennie Stephens of Newberry, Michigan. Three years later, she was pronounced incurable of consumption by several physicians who had given her the best treatment then possible. They advised Dr. Lake to take her north. On that advice, they returned to Sault Saint Marie. Five years later on April 28, 1898, she received an instantaneous healing under the ministry of John Alexander Dowie. In Sault Saint Marie, Lake opened a real estate office. As a salesman and a contractor, he remained there until 1901. During this time, together with George A. Feris, he founded the *SOO Times*, a local newspaper.

In 1904, he moved to Chicago and bought a seat on the Chicago Board of Trade with money borrowed from a friend. During this time, he handled Jim Hill's western Canadian land and made a long time personal friend of this great railroad financier.

The first day he opened his office, he made \$2,500 on a real estate deal. At the end of twenty-one months in the real estate business, he had over \$100,000 in the bank, a \$30,000 paid-up life insurance policy, and real estate valued at \$90,000. (Gordon Lindsay, *Sketches from the Life and Ministry of John G. Lake* (Shreveport, Louisiana: Voice of Healing Publishing Co., 1952), p. 14.) He traveled to New York representing the Chicago Board of Trade. There he met Tom Lawson, together with Mr. Harriman and Mr. Ryan, all celebrated financiers. (the name Harriman is still big on Wall Street. TP) He was employed by Ryan to further his negotiations, amounting to \$170,000, in an effort to form a large insurance trust

between the New York Life, Equitable, and Mutual Insurance companies. He also represented Mr. Lawson on the New York Board of Trade.

About this time, a huge scandal erupted in New York in relation to insurance companies. Dr. Lake, together with several others, organized the People's Life Insurance Company of Chicago. He was appointed manager of agencies and wrote a million dollars worth of business in his first year. He had received a guarantee of \$50,000 a year to continue in this business, but it was during this time that God dealt with him in such a way that the course of his life was definitely altered.

A number of years had passed since God had healed his wife, Jennie. During this time, he had continued practicing the ministry of healing. Every answer to prayer and miraculous touch of God created within him a greater longing for the deeper things of the Spirit.

During his business life, he made it a habit of speaking somewhere practically every night. After the services, he was in the habit of joining with friends who, like himself, were determined to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit as they believed the early disciples had received it (Acts 2:1-4). His prayer was, "God, if You will baptize me in the Holy Ghost and give me the power of God, nothing shall be permitted to stand between me and one hundredfold obedience."

Sometime after this, he accompanied a minister to pray for an invalid lady who had had inflammatory rheumatism for ten years. While the minister talked with the lady, John Lake sat at the opposite side of the room deeply moved in his spirit. He testified that he suddenly felt as though he had just passed under a deep shower or warm tropical rain that fell not only on him, but through him. His whole being was soothed into a deep stillness and calm. An awe of the presence of God settled over him. After moments passed, he seemed to hear the Lord say, "I have heard your prayers, and I have seen your tears. You are now baptized in the Holy Spirit." Then Dr. Lake testified to "currents of power" that began to rush through his being, increasing so greatly at his entire body began to vibrate intensely.

At this time, the minister friend asked him to join him in prayer for the woman. He found it difficult to walk across the room - the presence of the Lord was so intense. As he touched the sister's head with his hand, her clenched hands opened and her joints began to work. The woman who had been an invalid for so long arose from her wheelchair and was perfectly healed!

As a result of this baptism, Dr. Lake testified to seeing mankind through "new eyes." He had a great desire to proclaim the message Christ and to demonstrate His power in the world.

April 1907, he closed his office door for the last time and disposed of his bank account by giving to various religious and educational institutions. Fred R. Burr of Winamac, Indiana, who was his financial agent, assisted him in disposing of everything, including his real estate holdings.

Dr. Lake started out in independent evangelistic work with a single dollar, being absolutely dependent upon the Lord - along the faith lines of George Mueller of England and Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission.

During the next several months, he preached each day to large congregations with outstanding results. Many people accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior, others were healed of diseases, while still others received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. While in a meeting in northern Illinois, the Lord spoke to him and directed him to go to Indianapolis to prepare for a winter campaign. He was instructed to acquire a large hall, and then he was told that in the spring he would go to Africa.

On April 19, 1908, he left Indianapolis, Indiana, for Johannesburg, South Africa. He needed \$2,000 for expenses but had not one cent. In answer to private prayer in his own room, an unknown donor from Monrovia, California, a place he had never visited nor known of anyone living there, sent to a friend four \$500 drafts. He told the friend that God had urged him to send Lake \$2,000. It was needed for a special purpose, although that purpose was unknown to the donor.

God supplied the expenses needed.

## ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA

He arrived with his missionary party in South Africa, on May 15, 1908. Before he could come ashore, it was necessary for him to place \$125 with the immigration department. He, again, had not one cent. As he stood in the line of people who were making their payments, awaiting his chance to explain his dilemma to the immigration officer, a man walked up, tapped him on the shoulder, and called him out of the line. He handed him a traveler's check for \$200 and said, "I feel led to give you this to help your work." Gordon Lindsay, *The John G. Lake Sermons* (Shreveport, Louisiana: Voice of Healing Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 12-13.

On arrival at Johannesburg, he and his family had nowhere to go. They were strangers with no friends or acquaintances there. As they stepped ashore, Mrs. C. L. Goodenough, an American missionary and a complete stranger, walked up to Dr. Lake and said, "While in prayer last night, God told me to meet this boat and that there would be upon it an American missionary with a family of nine, consisting of two adults and seven children, and that I was to give them a home." At three o'clock that afternoon, the Lakes were living in a furnished cottage in Johannesburg that God had provided for them.

Some time later Dr. Lake went on an exploring trip in the Kalahari Desert. He returned to Johannesburg to find his wife dead. A sudden stroke had instantly killed her. She had no other illnesses. In *God's Generals*, Pastor Liardon goes into more detail. Due to the strenuous demands of ministry, Jennie Lake was exhausted and malnourished, which probably caused her stroke.

Early in 1909, Dr. Lake met Bishop Furze, the bishop of the Church of England for Africa. At the bishop's request, Dr. Lake arranged a series of meetings for the church of England ministers. He was to teach them along the lines of divine healing. These meetings resulted in the establishment of the Emmanuel Society for the Practice of Divine Healing by the ministry of the Church of England in Africa.

As word of these meetings and the work of the society continued to go forth, a committee from England came to examine and report upon Dr. Lake's work. He later accompanied that committee to England and conducted similar meetings in London under the direction of Bishop Ingram.

This conference authorized a committee to further visit other healing institutions in England and Europe. In the company of this committee, he visited healing institutions in London and went to Lourdes, France. There, they visited a Catholic institution where healing was reputed to take place by the waters of Lourdes and where they maintained a board of two hundred physicians whose business it was to examine all candidates and report upon them.

At Lourdes, they were privileged to visit the then greatest hypnotic institution for healing in the world. This institution sent its representatives to demonstrate their methods to the Catholic board of two hundred physicians, and hearing of the committee, they were invited to go along. Dr. Lake agreed to take part if he were allowed to make the final demonstration.

The committee selected five candidates who had been pronounced medically incurable. The hypnotists tried their various methods without success. Dr. Lake then had the five candidates placed in chairs in a row upon the platform in view of the audience of physicians and scientists. He prayed over each one of them separately. Three were instantly healed, a fourth recovered in a few days, and one passed away.

Dr. Lake returned to the United States for six months, holding evangelistic crusades in Chicago, Portland, Oakland, and Los Angeles for the purpose of recruiting missionaries to take with him to South Africa. During these crusades, he acquired eight men but needed \$3,000 for their expenses. While in Portland, praying alone in his room, he received assurance that the answer was on the way. Four days later in Los Angeles, a letter arrived at his hotel from George B. Studd of Los Angeles.

"Dear Dr. Lake: There has been a windfall in your favor today. A person who does not wish to be known gave me a draft of \$3,000 saying, "God wants me to give this to Lake of South Africa." I am sending you, enclosed, therefore a draft for \$3,005, the \$5 being my personal contribution."

In January 1910, he returned to South Africa with his missionary party via London, where he preached in Dr. F. B. Meyer's church and spoke in G. Campbell Morgan's weekly Bible classes.

He then remained in South Africa for several years, during which time he founded the Apostolic Faith Mission with headquarters at Johannesburg. He was elected its president and continued for years after that to be its honorary president. During his ministry, he organized 125 white congregations and 500 black congregations.

In 1920, the African fever ravaged the area in which he lived, and in less than a month, one-quarter of the black and white populations died. Agencies of every description were called into action to combat the epidemic. Dr. Lake worked there with several assistants, four of whom died of the fever, but he never had a touch of the disease.

Later in Johannesburg, he was invited by Louis Botha, premier of Transvaal, to visit the Transvaal Parliament, where resolutions were passed recognizing his services during the severe epidemic.

Due to the strain of overwork with the Apostolic Faith Mission, he ultimately gave up his ministry in South Africa to return to the United States. There, he met and married Miss Florence Switzer of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on November 27, 1913. In addition to the seven children born from his first marriage, five more children were born into his second union.

John G. Lake was on hand at the organizational meeting of the Assemblies of God on April 2, 1914, in Hot Springs, Arkansas! (Irwin Winehouse, *The Assemblies of God A Popular Survey* (New York: Vantage Press 1959, P. 31) He did not become a member, however, neither at that time nor at any time later.

That summer, Jim Lake met Jim Hill while walking along the street one day in St. Paul. When asked about what he was doing, Dr. Lake replied that he was simply trying to gather his health and that he was preaching wherever he went.

Mr. Hill invited him to his office and gave him complimentary passes that were good over all of his railroad lines.

Dr. and Mrs. Lake began traveling, stopping at Spokane where he was invited to open a healing room. He accepted the invitation and ministered to the sick for about six months. Thus, he was to begin the ministry that was really the climax of his life's work.

## THE HEALING MISSION IN SPOKANE

Dr. Lake's entire ministry had been profoundly affected by his exposure to John Alexander Dowie. Dr. Lake had been an elder in the Zion Apostolic Church when Dowie was at the height of his power. Thus he, together with various other persons exposed to the Dowie approach to Christian living, became dynamic disciples and missionaries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, coming west through the Dakotas, Montana, and into Washington.

Dr. Lake had made no preparation or study that prepared him for missionary work, nor was he particularly trained in a theological perspective, as were most ministers. But he was a man of strong and forceful personality who seemed to make his way to the forefront in whatever situation he found himself.

His ministry had its weaknesses as well as its strengths. It was believed by some that his failure to properly anticipate the heavy responsibilities his wife had to carry was an unfortunate mistake that contributed to her untimely death on the mission field. This fact, plus the responsibilities he now had in order to care for a large family, was one of the primary contributing factors to the close of his ministry on the mission field. However, his days of glory were not yet finished.

His early ministry in the city of Spokane became a demonstration of the power of God that resulted in more than one-hundred thousand healings being reported during a period of five or six years. Some declared that Dr. Lake, through his ministry of divine healing, had made Spokane the healthiest city in the world. This, of course, was similar to a documented report that came out of Washington, D.C., some years earlier regarding Zion, Illinois, during the peak days of John Alexander Dowie's ministry.

His activity in Spokane had such impact that the *Spokesman Daily Review*, carried full-page advertisements each week regarding his ministry and the miraculous acts of documented healing. The full-page advertisements in the *Spokesman Review* were often as follows: (*The Spokesman Review*, May 19, 1918.)

The Church at Spokane  
John G. Lake, Overseer  
Divine Healing Rooms, 340 Rookery Building  
Open each weekday from 10 to 4.  
Personal interviews and ministry  
Through prayer and laying on of hands.  
Public services on Sunday at  
The Masonic Temple at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.  
Our ministry is private and confidential. Persons desiring to  
Give public testimony must arrange with the ministers in advance.

Then would follow letters of testimony from those who had received healing and/or their physicians, as well as articles by Dr. Lake.

In a general letter published Saturday, February 8, 1919, in the *Spokesman Review*, Dr. Lake indicated that they ministered to an average of two hundred people per day in the healing rooms. He indicated that over sixty thousand personal "ministrations through prayer and laying on of hands" had taken place during the previous twelve months. In addition, calls for prayer and the ministry came by telephone, telegraph, letter, and cable from all parts of the world.

Ministry to the sick in their homes was another phase of work accomplished by the use of two motor cars in which ministers were conveyed from home to home, praying for those who were unable to present themselves at the healing rooms. Dr. Lake indicated that at least one hundred thousand people were ministered to each year either by car, telephone, telegraph, letter, or cable.

Thousands of people would attend the Sunday Services held each week at the Masonic Temple. Dr. Lake always liked to make a point of emphasizing that he did not spend money building church buildings and "sepulchers for the dead.". Funds given to the church at Spokane would be used to send forth the Gospel message into the world, according to Dr. Lake. There were no fees charged for any of the ministry, and the entire project was supported by means of love offerings. An especially appealing story was published on September 20, 1919, in the *Spokesman Review*. It was testimony shared by Walter J. Williams, science department, chairman of an eastern university.

In the article, he told about two of his friends in the East who had traveled to Spokane and received amazing healings. This scientist-educator was very adverse to anything savoring of what might be called the supernatural, but he journeyed to Spokane to gather first hand information. He visited several persons who professed to have been healed under Dr. Lake's ministry. Then he visited the man himself. After an extended interview, he was invited to stay and see for himself what God was doing there.

Dr. Williams did.

"I saw them come, hundreds in a day. I talked to them, asking them questions - the lame, the poor, the rich, the uneducated, and the intellectual. Were they healed? Yes, they were. Was I convinced that it was God? Indeed, I was. The presence of God was there and I left Spokane inquiring if I was true enough to God to be trusted with His power as Dr. Lake and his associates were.

I have listened to some of the greatest teachers on earth, both secular and religious, but I have never heard such revelations of life or such a revelation of God as I heard and witnessed at the Healing Rooms in the Rookery Building in Spokane." *The Spokesman Review, September 20, 1919.*

## LAKE AND DIVINE HEALING INVESTIGATED

One summer, Dr. Lake and his staff were waited upon at their healing rooms by a committee of the Better Business Bureau of the city of Spokane. Their duty was to investigate the truthfulness of the public announcements that were continuing to appear in the city papers. For some time, Lake's staff had been publishing many of the testimonies

through the power of God that had taken place in the of their ministry .

These testimonies were so astounding that complaints had reached the Better Business Bureau to the effect that the testimonies must certainly be untrue. The Better Business Bureau immediately undertook an investigation of the Healing Rooms' ministry and Dr. John G. Lake.

The committee examined eighteen witnesses whose testimonies had appeared in public print. Further names of persons who had received healings within the city were given to the committee so that they could go personally and investigate for themselves whether or not these things were so.

Dr. Lake suggested to the committee that on Sunday, June 23, at 11 o'clock in the afternoon in a public service, he would present one hundred cases of healed persons for their investigation. He invited them to form a committee composed of physicians, lawyers, judges, educators, and businessmen who could render a verdict. During the intervening period between the interview in the healing rooms and Sunday, June 23, the committee continued their investigations. On Friday, June 21, Dr. Lake received a letter from the committee assuring him that they had no desire to interfere in any way with the good being done and had determined that their appearance at the Sunday meeting would not be necessary. Two members of the investigation committee spoke privately to Dr. Lake and his staff and said that the committee was astounded. They had found out upon investigation that "the half had not been told."

One of the committee members visited at Davenport, Washington, and found printed announcements advertising a meeting Dr. Lake was about to conduct in the area. He inquired as to why these announcements were being made and the manager of the store replied:

“The whole countryside 'round Davenport is aflame with surprise at the marvelous healing of a girl in this community, well-known to me, and, I believe, well-known to yourself, Miss Louise Reinboldt daughter of Mr. Jack Reinboldt. About three and a half years ago, Miss Reingold and her sister were operated on for what the doctors thought was appendicitis. The one girl died as a result of the operation. Louise came out of it unable to speak. She was taken to throat specialists, who pronounced her case absolutely incurable. Recently she was taken to Spokane to Dr. Lake's Healing Rooms and ministered to for twenty-six days.

On the twenty-sixth day she startled her mother and family and, in fact, the whole countryside, by calling her mother on the long distance telephone and announcing to her in plain words the fact that she was "healed." While preparing for her daily visit to the Healing Rooms she heard herself whistling and said, "Well, if I can whistle, I can speak also," and thus discovered the paralyzed condition of her throat was truly healed." "Gordon Lindsay, *Sketches from the Life of John G. Lake, Op, Cit., pp. 107-110.*"

After the Better Business Bureau committee backed away from further investigation, Dr. Lake announced that there would be no change in the program. He indicated the meeting would take place as announced, and if the Better Business Bureau would not take their place, he would appeal to the public for its verdict. Thousands of people attended that afternoon in the Masonic Temple, while hundreds were refused admittance due to lack of space. Testimonies by ministers and lay people alike of significant, documented healings were given throughout the remainder of the afternoon. The publicity of this meeting was tremendous and was perhaps one of the high points in the sometimes controversial, but always unique, ministry of John G. Lake.

In May 1920, Dr. Lake moved to Portland, Oregon, to establish a similar work to that of his church in Spokane. Within a few years, this ministry in Portland was making a similar impact in Oregon as had the church in the Inland Empire. One of his converts in Portland was Gordon Lindsay, who later became an independent Pentecostal evangelist of some significance and forerunner of the present Christ for the Nations ministry headquartered in Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Lake's ministry was unusual - to say the least. He possessed a remarkable ability to create faith in the hearts of his hearers. Gordon Lindsay was no exception. Having followed Dr. Lake's ministry with deep respect and admiration, he one day had need of the great man's faith. He was stricken with a critical case of ptomain poisoning and hung for days between life and death. Dr. Lake offered prayer for Gordon, and although deliverance did not immediately come in a visible manner, he professed confidence that indeed the Lord had answered prayer. Mrs.

Lake brought Reverend Lindsay some of the typewritten sermons her husband had recently given, and while reading these faith suddenly sprang into his heart. He arose from what many had thought was a deathbed, instantly healed.

While he was in Portland, Dr. Lake entertained hopes for raising up a chain of healing missions on the order of his works in Spokane and Portland. However, though he was not yet advanced in age, he lived with an intensity that had taken its toll. A decline in the strength and vitality that had characterized his earlier ministry became apparent. He seemed unable to match his spiritual vision with the physical strength that was required to bring it to pass. In Houston, Texas, he had some initial success in the founding of a church, but was called away to the side of his eldest son who had suffered a serious accident almost took his life. He never returned to Houston.

For awhile, he ministered in churches throughout California. However, the dynamic touch that he once had was lacking. He returned to the city of Portland, where he pastored for a time. Afterwards, he returned to Spokane. There he pastored until his death.

On Labor Day 1935, Dr. and Mrs. Lake attended a Sunday school picnic. He came home very tired and after a hot supper, lay down to rest. A guest speaker was at the church that evening so Mrs. Lake prevailed on him to stay at home. She went to church in his place. When she arrived home, she found that he had a stroke in her absence. He lingered for about two weeks, unconscious most of the time, until September 16, 1935, when he went to be with his Lord.

His ministry was summed up in the brief testimony of Reverend B. S. Hebden who spoke at the memorial service:

“Dr. Lake was a strong, rugged character of loving and winning personality, and he has left his mark indelibly upon the world of Gospel Truth.

Dr. Lake came to Spokane. He found us in sin. He found us in sickness. He found us in poverty of spirit. He found us in despair, but he revealed to us such a Christ as we had never dreamed of knowing this side of heaven. We thought victory was over there, but Dr. Lake revealed to us that victory was here, a present and possible reality. We regarded death almost as a friend, but Dr. Lake came and revealed to us the Christ, all-glorious and all-powerful, that is triumphant, compassionate, and lovely, and our night was turned into day and despair was turned into laughter. A light shone in the darkness and we, who found Christ at last as He really is, only have words as the words of Thomas, who said, "My Lord and My God."

How I thank God that Brother Lake came to Spokane! How I thank Him that I ever contacted that man, unique, powerful! I will never forget the day in the Hutton Block when I was sick with several chronic complaints and I heard that message of Christ, that His arms were under me, and I kept it and the message kept me and instead of my being long and long ago, gone and forgotten, I am here rejoicing and thanking our brother, Dr. Lake, who brought that message to me. Friends, he should still speak in me, not by the pen but by the Spirit that is in me, by the Light that is in me, by the regeneration of Jesus Christ that is in me. Let us finish, friends, not to go and squander it by hiding it in a napkin, but let us keep it by giving it out.”

NOTE: Much of the additional information came from conversations with various persons who knew him and from some of his mimeographed messages.

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