

BOGUS ASTRONAUTS AND FALSE TEACHERS

by Tom Wacaster

Several years ago there appeared an article in the Houston Chronicle that still serves as a stark reminder that things are not always as they seem. The report told of a man who was "laid back," "friendly," and very "knowledgeable." These were a few of the epitaphs used by surprised individuals as they sought for words to describe Jerry Allen Whittredge, a "wanna-be" insider in NASA, CIA, and who knows where else his dreamings might have taken him. By falsely claiming to be an astronaut, this 48-year old Galveston man gained access into NASA's most secure area. He was so convincing that he was granted a tour of Marshall Space Center and access to Mission Control and was permitted to sit at the console during a shuttle mission. Mr. Whittredge is now in custody as authorities try to sort out why and how this man was able to deceive so many. The bottom line is: **SOMEONE FORGOT TO CHECK HIS CREDENTIALS.** As a result, a phony gained access to otherwise restricted areas, NASA officials have 'egg on their face,' and government security is under close scrutiny. IF NASA ran her business like some of our brethren would have us run the church when it comes to exposing and dealing with men like Whittredge, here is what might have happened. At first 'light' of Mr. Whittredge's activities, someone would have asked, "Well, have you gone to Mr. Whittredge yourself? Have you personally discussed your grievance with him? If not, then we find no grounds to take your accusations seriously." Who cares that the man traveled the country in his mobile home, maintained a web page touting his bogus but believable identity, and continued to gain access into important areas of government circles. According to this way of thinking, until you personally track the man down, get him to sit down and answer your questions, you have no right to restrict his access to sensitive governmental areas. Any question regarding his qualifications might just label you as some sort of a vile and vicious trouble maker. When presented with overwhelming evidence that the man was, and is, a phony, those in high places would remind you that Mr. Whittredge is really very nice, "laid back," and quite "knowledgeable." "Why-y-y, have you ever listened to this man speak?" someone might respond. "He is so good, and speaks with such sincerity and deep down love for NASA and the government." Yes sir, with that kind of personality, the man should be given the benefit of the doubt and allowed continued access to these sensitive areas of government. But somewhere along the line a concerned official raises a most serious question. "Has anyone checked the man's credentials?" "Credentials? What are you, some sort of a legalist? You radical knucklehead, can't you see that this man is sincere? And besides that, what constitutes legitimate credentials? That is nothing more than your interpretation of NASA's code and qualifications list." Well, I think you get the picture by now. We are happy to report that Mr. Whittredge is now under arrest. Any harm he might have done has been effectively rendered null and void. His "mouth has been shut," and his influence curtailed. I just wish I could say the same thing about the false teachers who roam our land wrecking havoc on the Lord's church from coast to coast and beyond. Perhaps we ought to take a lesson from the government's reaction to this "bogus astronaut" and pursue the same course of action concerning false teachers that are troubling the Lord's church.