

Rom. 12:4–8, 1 Cor. 12:12–31, Eph. 4:4–16. Although William Branham compared himself to the Old Testament prophet Elijah and thought he had no peers, the Bible does not allow Old Testament standards to govern the operation of a New Testament church.

Branham’s doctrine that the seven churches in Rev. 2–3 are really “Church Ages” is a private speculation flawed on several levels. Although some Christians have endorsed this theory, it is more likely that they represent simultaneous churches both locally and globally.

There are other problems in the Church Age theory. For instance, Branham called St. Columba the “messenger” to the Thyatirean Age (AD 606 to 1520), totally unaware that Columba died in 597. Also, the “messengers” Martin Luther (Sardis) and John Wesley (Philadelphia) defended the Trinity, yet Branham (Laodicea) denounced the Trinity. Branham claimed he was a “prophet-messenger,” and thus was able to correct Luther and Wesley, who were “not prophets.” Note again that Branham has found a way to give himself a greater position of authority than other leaders.

Branham’s “tent vision” is another example of pride, where Branham sees himself doing something nobody else can do. The Bible says, “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said” (1 Cor. 14:29, NIV). But the pattern in a Branham service is that only he spoke, and no one else was accepted as an equal, a peer, or having anything meaningful to say.

MAJOR ERRORS OF BRANHAMISM

Branham denied the Trinity and claimed that Trinitarians believe in “three gods.” Christians who believe in the Trinity believe in **one God**, not three gods (James 2:19). Christians believe in the Trinity because only persons (with mind, will, personality) can communicate with one another or give testimony (see John 8:17–18). An *office* or *title* or *attribute* cannot love another office, title, or attribute. The Father loves the Son (John 3:35), which is something that only “persons” can do. If “Father” and “Son” are only titles of the same person, then this verse is just saying that one person loves himself.

Branham said that God entered Jesus at His baptism, and left him in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, the John 1:1 teaches that Jesus was God “in the beginning.” John 1:14 says that God the Word was “made flesh.” From His birth (not His baptism), Jesus was *Immanuel*, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). The Magi could rightfully worship Jesus only if the infant Jesus was truly God incarnate. Jesus was God incarnate even hanging on the cross, which is why his blood has infinite value to atone for sin (see also Acts 20:28).

Branham claimed that Jesus “never said He was the Son of God” during His days on earth. Branham thought that the term “Son of God” should refer to Jesus after the Resurrection, and the term “Son of Man” ought to refer to Jesus before the Resurrection. This is also in error. Jesus definitely called Himself the Son of God prior to His crucifixion and Resurrection (see Matt. 16:16, John 3:16–18, 5:25, 9:35–37, 10:36, and 11:4).

Branham said Eve’s sin was having sex with an animal. He said the Serpent looked human, but was “pure animal” indwelt by Satan. It was “in between a chimpanzee and a man, but closer to a man.” After having sex with the Serpent, she then slept with Adam. Branham taught that Cain came from the Serpent, and Abel from Adam. Genesis 4:1 clearly affirms that Eve bore Cain from Adam, though Branham has a distorted explanation for this verse as well.

Branham denied eternal punishment, and said that Satan and the wicked would suffer for a while and then be annihilated. Jesus strongly taught eternal punishment, not annihilation (Matt. 3:12, 13:42, 18:18, 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43–48).

Branham taught that Jesus Christ would probably return by 1977. Though he called it a “prediction,” not a “prophecy,” he still taught it and used his visions to show why we should expect it to come true. This prediction, like his “tent vision,” did not come to pass (see Deut. 18:21-22).

CONCLUSIONS

Certain questions naturally arise: Were Branham’s healings real? Was he ever a true minister? If so, when did he depart from the truth?

Some of his healings were certainly real. Some people who were blind, crippled, and stricken with disease were restored to health. Yet their healing is only due to the grace of God. This does *not* mean that God has appointed Branham to lead all Christians everywhere.

However, not all the people Branham pronounced “healed” actually *were* healed. This brought disrepute on the Church because some Christians came home rejoicing and telling others about their healing, but died instead.⁹

Branham’s rejection of the Trinity should be the first sign that something is wrong. In his early days he thought that people’s love for Jesus was more important than their views on Oneness or the Trinity, but he changed his mind in a few years. Most of his false doctrines—his identity as Elijah, the serpent’s seed, annihilation, the 1977 prophecy, and others—emerged after 1953. **Seeds of error planted early in his life were never rooted out.**

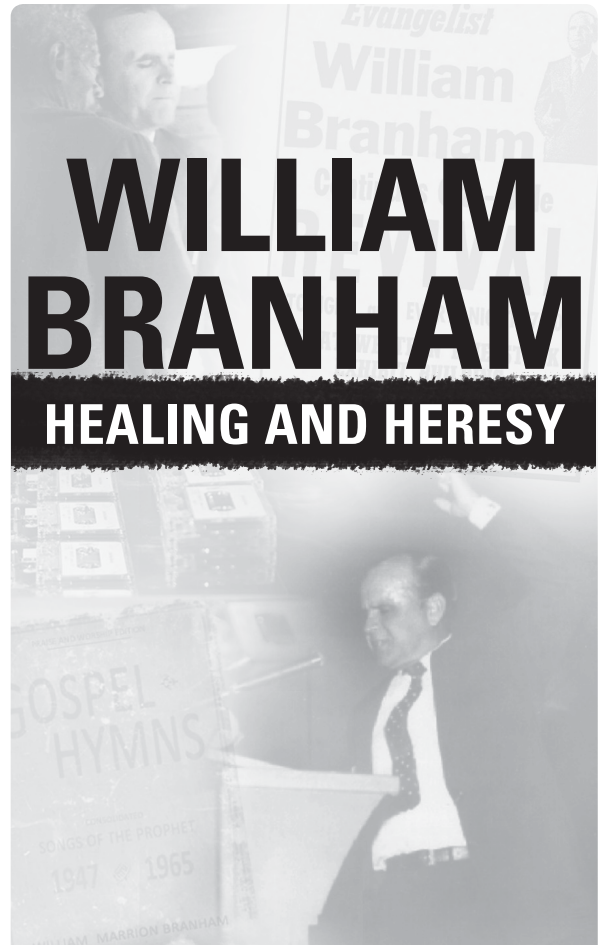
REFERENCES

- ¹ Gordon Lindsay, *William Branham: A Man Sent from God* (Jeffersonville, IN: William Branham, 1950), p. 83.
- ² Representative William D. Upshaw (Georgia, served 1918–1926) was healed on 1951-02-08.
- ³ He called it “the third pull,” using the image of a fisherman pulling a fish out of the water.
- ⁴ Hosea, Amos, and Jonah all prophesied between 755 and 750 BC. Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea all prophesied between 740 and 715 BC. Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Nahum all prophesied between 630 and 615 BC. Ezekiel and Daniel both prophesied between 593 and 570 BC, include Obadiah between 586 and 570 BC. Haggai and Zechariah both prophesied at the same time to the same people (520 BC).
- ⁵ Branham’s dates for the seven Church Ages came directly from Clarence Larkin’s book *Dispensational Truth* (Philadelphia: Clarence Larkin Estate, 1920).
- ⁶ William Branham, *An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages* (Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, 1965), pp. 319–365.
- ⁷ William Branham, *Footprints on the Sands of Time* (Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, 1975), p. 518.
- ⁸ Branham, *Exposition of the Seven Church Ages*, pp. 98–99.
- ⁹ See the discussion thread, “And They Were All Healed Every One,” at Message of Wm. Branham Support Forum, <http://forums.delphiforums.com/kennah/messages?msg=1544.1>

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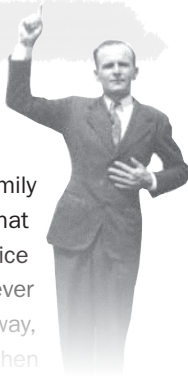
William M. Branham is often described as someone who possessed extraordinary spiritual gifts in divine healing and supernatural knowledge. Although Mr. Branham died in 1965 (well over 40 years ago), thousands believe he was a prophet sent to this generation.

William Branham enjoyed a prominent ministry in the 1950s, but ultimately fell into disrepute due to his divisive claims. His doctrines are now distributed across the world by Message churches, Believers churches, Eagle churches, and various other names. Their common belief is that “Brother Branham” is the prophet Elijah.

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BRIEF HISTORY

William Marrion Branham was born in a two-room log cabin near Burkesville, Kentucky (U.S.A.) on April 6, 1909. He was the first of ten children. Later, the family moved to Indiana. Branham claimed that about the age of seven, he heard a voice speak to him out of a whirlwind, “Never drink, smoke, or defile your body in any way, for there will be a work for you to do when you are older.”



Branham left home at the age of 18 to work in Arizona, but returned after learning that one of his brothers had died. He soon converted to Christianity, claiming a lifelong series of supernatural events and visions. In 1932, Dr. Roy Davis of the First Pentecostal Baptist Church ordained him as an “exhorter.” Branham rented a tent for revival meetings in 1933, baptizing about 130 people that June. He started a church, and his converts named it Branham Tabernacle.

Branham says that in May 1946, he went to a secret place in the woods to ask God to take away the voices and visions. There he met an angel who told him he had been called to take the gift of healing to the nations, and that if he would be sincere and could get the people to believe in him, “nothing shall stand before your prayer, not even cancer.”

The angel said God would provide two signs to confirm the message: the first was vibrations in his left hand, which would diagnose diseases. The second sign would be even more powerful: he would know the secrets of people’s hearts, and if they did not believe the first sign, they would believe the second. The angel said these signs were given so that people should believe in Jesus Christ and bring together all the Christians, without being separated by denominations.¹

Branham returned home and told the story. He was asked to come to St. Louis, Missouri, to pray for a dying child. Branham came, and the girl was dramatically healed. Other churches invited him to hold healing services, and they also witnessed amazing healings. At first, most of these meetings were sponsored by “oneness” churches (Pentecostal churches that denied the Trinity, also called

“Jesus only” churches). Large auditoriums were rented for the thousands who came.

By autumn of 1947, Branham’s ministry spread through “union” meetings of Trinitarian and Oneness churches. The focus was on prayer, healing, and deliverance; doctrinal differences were pushed aside. Many other evangelists with a ministry of healing and deliverance arose during the healing revival of 1946–1954, such as Oral Roberts and T. L. Osborn. Branham was not well-educated in the Scripture and in the early years of the revival, older Christians such as Gordon Lindsay and Ern Baxter taught while he concentrated on healing.

People were drawn to Branham because he was humble, poor, and never sought after money. At first he tried to pray for all who came to his services, but the exercise of his “gift” so drained his strength that he was often carried from the platform in total exhaustion. Branham distributed “prayer cards” to limit the number of people he would be asked to pray for. Still, thousands came hoping for a miracle, and it was answered for some people. A former U.S. Congressman crippled for 66 years was healed.²

By 1955 the healing revival subsided. Churches did not support him as they had in the past. Branham sometimes arrived at meetings late or not at all, which disappointed the hosting churches. As the revival died down, donations fell, and the ministry couldn’t pay its debts. Branham became angry that other ministers were developing gifts like his (with vibrations in their hands, visions, words of knowledge, etc.), frequently referring to them as “carnal impersonators.” Branham more openly revealed doctrines he had previously restricted to his home church, Branham Tabernacle.

About this time, Branham had a “tent vision” of himself ministering inside a huge tent (very popular among traveling evangelists), performing healings that no other minister could ever do. He accepted this as proof that God intended to set him above all other Pentecostal ministers. Afterward, Branham had a vision of himself receiving a spiritual gift so powerful that it would enable to Body of Christ to go up in the Rapture.³

Today, some people believe Branham left his original calling, while others believe he was never called by God to begin with. In any case, it is clear that after 1955 his false doctrines multiplied, and he developed an exalted view of his own

importance to the Christian church. By the 1960s, his followers were treating his every word as Scripture.

Though Branham expected to be alive by the return of Christ—which he said would occur by 1977 at the latest—this was not to be. While driving from Arizona to Indiana, his car was struck head-on by a drunk driver. Mr. Branham died on December 24, 1965, at the age of 56. A funeral service was held at Branham Tabernacle a few days later. However, Branham’s wife was still recovering from injuries, so her husband was not buried until April 11, 1966.

AFTER BRANHAM’S DEATH

His followers began collecting every recording of his sermons. The main audio distribution outlet is Voice of God Recordings (notice what that name implies!). Books are issued by Spoken Word Publications and other publishers.

Almost 1,200 recordings exist of Branham’s sermons. Branham never wrote any books, but he authorized his followers to publish his sermons. They reproduce every stutter or mispronunciation exactly. His two most important books, authorized shortly before his death, are *An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages* and *The Revelation of the Seven Seals*. The “Church Age book” has been edited to read more smoothly than the others.

In addition, the “Message churches” have produced their own literature, promoting him as the prophet Elijah for this age. Branham’s teaching covers too many subjects to address thoroughly. We will touch on the most important ones.

SOME TRUTH, BUT MUCH ERROR

Though Mr. Branham taught serious error, he also taught some truths. Branham taught that God created the universe, that mankind is separated from God by sin, that the Bible is God’s Word, that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, dying on the cross for sinners and rising from the dead three days later. Branham would affirm the importance of prayer, holiness, faith, and being born again.

One would think that with these points of agreement, we could endorse Branham’s message as fully Christian. Unfortunately, we cannot.

Just as rat poison contains mostly edible food with a small percentage of deadly poison, so it is with heresy. Branham taught some true things, but his key teachings contain things that are spiritually crippling. As responsible Christians, we are obligated to expose them. The apostle Paul warned the elders of Ephesus, “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears” (Acts 20:30–31, NIV).

THE PERIL OF PRIDE

In the last half of his career, Branham taught (by strong suggestions that stopped just short of making a direct statement) that **he was the prophet Elijah**, sent to fulfill Malachi 4:5 before the Return of Christ. He claimed that God used “only one prophet” in the world at any time. This claim is false and unbiblical.⁴

Branham frequently said that his visions “always” came to pass (also not true), and that his perfect record of predictions “vindicated” him as the one prophet for the last days.

Further, he said the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 stand for seven periods of time, and the “angel” of each church was really a “messenger” for each “church age.”⁴ Branham said **he was the prophet-messenger of the Laodicean Church**, preparing the Bride of Christ for the Rapture.⁶

He believed **he was the “mighty angel”** of Rev. 10:1, **the “seventh angel”** of Rev. 10:7, and that **Jesus predicted Branham’s ministry** in Luke 17:30 to occur “in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” Whether “Son of man” meant Jesus or Branham himself was not always clear.

The key danger is *pride*. Even if Branham had a perfect record of healing (which he did not), he was wrong to assume the role of “directing the Bride of Jesus Christ.”⁷

The New Testament does not show one prophet or apostle conveying the whole Truth to the elect. Many gifts and offices occur in the Body of Christ. They are not all dispensed through one man. This is evident in