

Revivals And Church History :: The Wonderful and Fearful Life of William Marion Branham

The Wonderful and Fearful Life of William Marion Branham - posted by wayneman (), on: 2015/7/4 22:03

THE WONDERFUL AND FEARFUL LIFE OF WILLIAM MARION BRANHAM

by Wayne Kraus

Of all the colorful and outrageous characters in the annals of American revivalism, one of the most engaging is William Marion Branham.

He was born in 1909 in a log cabin in the hills of Kentucky and had no religious upbringing. While assisting his father at a moonshine still, an angel appeared in a tree and said, "Don't you never drink, smoke or defile your body in any way. There'll be a work for you to do when you get older."

As a young man he worked as a logger, game warden and linesman, was converted after the death of his brother, experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and began to preach in 1933 at the age of 24.

That year, while baptizing in the Ohio River a pillar of fire appeared in the sky and a voice said, "As John the Baptist was sent forth to forerun the first coming of Christ, you are sent forth with a message to forerun the second coming of Christ."

His wife and daughter died in the Ohio River flood of 1937.

He remarried and after a few "wilderness years" rose to prominence as a faith healer.

By the 1950's Branham was a giant of Pentecostalism, filling vast stadiums and arenas all over the world. With boyish enthusiasm he told of the supernatural light attendant upon his birth, angelic visitations, voices from heaven and the many miracles he had wrought, including the healing of a sunfish that had swallowed a hook and had its guts ripped out by a fisherman. His every sermon was about himself, his marvelous experiences, his spectacular revelations and his special calling as "the Angel of the Church of Laodicea" and "the herald of the Second Coming in the Spirit of Elijah."

Unlike most people who make such claims, he sounded like he sincerely believe them and expressed astonishment that God would show such favor toward such an unremarkable man as himself. And unlike most people in his line of work, he was untainted by the love of money or sexual corruption. He brought in vast sums of money, but lived modestly and devoted his fortune to the propagation of his message. Even his outrageous self-promotion demonstrated his lack of guile.

As his teaching drifted from mainstream Pentecostalism and his claims became increasingly spectacular, his popularity declined. The following that he managed to retain became an isolated sect, called "Branhamites" by their opponents and "Message Churches" by themselves.

Like all sectarians, Branham fulminated against sectarianism, teaching that denominational affiliation was the mark of the beast and all churches in such affiliations were synagogues of Satan.

Branham has always been a fat target for heresy hunters, though I do not see how anyone can either endorse or oppose his doctrine, since I myself find it too chaotic to pin down or categorize. He preached the Oneness doctrine but denounced Oneness preachers as "teachers of error." He railed against seminaries and theologians but borrowed their dispensational theology for his Exposition of the Seven Church Ages.

He preached the Serpent Seed doctrine, a backwoods version of hyper-election which teaches that Eve birthed Cain after fornicating with the serpent and then birthed Seth by Adam. Now every woman carries within her the Serpent Seed and the Adam Seed. Everyone is born of one of these two seeds. Therefore everyone's destiny is fixed the instant they come into the world. (Teachers of the Serpent Seed were delighted with the 1953 discovery of the DNA molecule, which they took as confirmation of their doctrine!)

In December of 1965 Branham was killed in a car crash, to the shock and disbelief of his followers. It is said that his body remained unburied until April because they expected him to rise from the dead.

To this day there are still Message Churches in the world, who display Branham's famous "Halo Picture" behind the pulpit and study his teachings so intently that they divide his sermon transcripts into chapter and verse, like the Holy Scriptures. This grandiose form often produces a comic effect since Branham's speech was full of hillbilly colloquialisms like "Well, by dingy, this here just turns my crank!"

The Message Churches have followed the inevitable sectarian pattern of dividing into smaller and smaller sub-sects who continually war with one another and ignore the rest of the church. The most extreme of these gather around Branham's grave each Easter Sunday to await his resurrection, believing that the Second Coming of Christ will be preceded by the Second Coming of Branham.

It is easy to smile at the simple faith of these country believers, but also easy to understand their fascination with Branham's elaborate landscape of end-time prophecies.

His most famous prophecy was the sevenfold vision of 1933. The prophecies were not put into print until 1965, long after the first three had been fulfilled, and so their fulfillment cannot be taken as evidence of Branham's prescience, but the last four have generated excited discussion in recent years.

1. Mussolini would conquer Ethiopia, but then die a horrible death at the hands of his own people.
 2. America would be drawn into a world war against Germany which would be headed up by the Austrian, Adolph Hitler, who would be vanquished and come to a mysterious end.
 3. The third part of the vision showed that though there were three isms, Fascism, Nazism, Communism in the world, the first two would come to nothing but that Communism would flourish.
 4. The fourth vision showed an egg-shaped car with a glass bubble roof which drove itself as the passengers played some kind of game. (Google has developed a self-driving car projected to hit the market by 2017-20.)
 5. The fifth scene had to do with the disappearance of modesty. He saw a woman, fully dressed at first, but her clothing became increasingly revealing until she was wearing nothing but a G-string, or as he put it, "a little fig leaf type apron."
 6. There will arise over America a beautiful but cruel woman of great power and terrible splendor. Branham suggested three interpretations of this femme fatale: 1) The Roman Catholic Church, 2) a female president, 3) a symbol of womankind overthrowing God-ordained gender roles and dominating men.
 7. "In the last and seventh vision I heard a terrible explosion. As I turned to look I saw nothing but debris, craters and smoke all over the land of America."
- Branham's prophecies are diligently studied and distributed worldwide from a warehouse in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

The Message Churches are not substantially different from other small town American Pentecostal churches: idealistic, close-knit, clannish, insular and fond of emphasizing doctrines and practices that set them apart from "the apostate church." The Message Churches are not the most important aspect of his legacy.

Branham was the pioneer and de facto leader of the infamous Voice of Healing movement: a college of money-grubbers, alcoholics, womanizers and charlatans including Jim Jones, Oral Roberts and the appropriately-named A.A. Allen. He was the first modern faith healer. It was he who devised the standard healing meeting: the sick are called forth from the audience, their malady revealed by "word of knowledge," prayed for and pronounced "healed." Many whom Branham pronounced healed were not healed. Though he may have been honest, sincere and morally upright, his legacy to the church is a malignant one. All the worst manifestations of American Pentecostalism "the Trinity Broadcast Network, PTL Club, Oral Roberts University and the Jonestown massacre" bear Branham's imprimatur. It was he who introduced to Pentecostalism the Apostolic Superman: the miracle-working spiritual giant "untainted by the world, the flesh and the devil." And what Supermen we've had, from Jim Jones to Robert Tilton. This race of Supermen has plagued Pentecostalism with scandal from the Voice of Healing era till now.

At the head of the stream of Pentecostalism that produced televangelism, the prosperity gospel, the Manifest Sons of God and the New Apostolic Reformation stands William Marion Branham.

The wonderful life of William Branham is a fearful reminder of the necessity of spiritual discernment. It is the story of a sincere man who failed to exercise discernment; a wholesome man who unwittingly opened a floodgate of iniquity.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Re: The Wonderful and Fearful Life of William Marion Branham - posted by Lysa (), on: 2015/7/4 23:16

Thank you for this, wayneman!!

Re: - posted by wayneman (), on: 2015/7/4 23:36

Thank you!

Re: - posted by hulsey (), on: 2015/7/5 0:06

William Branham's life and legacy is tragic. It reads like a warning sign to be avoided.

This link can provide a fuller perspective:

http://en.believethesign.com/index.php?title=William_Branham#cite_note-5

~Blessings

Re: , on: 2015/7/5 9:51

Good article, Wayneman.

Re: , on: 2015/7/5 9:56

The guy was an apostate who worked "miracles" by another power.

Re: - posted by JB1968 (), on: 2015/7/5 13:22

He was cultic and preached another gospel. Stay away from him. Don't be enamored by his seeming miracles. BTW, the Bible does not say that Satan had sex with Eve. Supposedly an angel had to tell him when he was born. He denies the Trinity. Sad.

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2015/7/5 19:34

William Branham was a man called as a prophet of God whose ministry was filled with supernatural signs and wonders. Throughout most of Branham's ministry, he was a humble servant of the Lord, and did well when Gordon Lindsay, who founded "The Voice of Healing", was his campaign manager. Lindsay was a good balance for Branham.

William Branham began to get in serious error when he did not give heed to the advice of Lindsay to stop teaching the Word. Branham was not called to be a teacher, and the error came into his ministry when he got outside of his calling.

A good book to read concerning the life and ministry of William Branham, which can be accessed online is "A Man Sent From God" by Gordon Lindsay.

Re: - posted by JB1968 (), on: 2015/7/5 22:31

I understand that the early copies were much different than the later copies. Also, why would they have people fill out cards who would later get in line and supposedly Branham would supernaturally tell things about them?