

The SERVANT

Educating the Church about False Religions and the Lost about Jesus Christ

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The Message of WILLIAM BRANHAM

part 3: Factions Within the Message Movement by John Kennah

Healer, Evangelist, and Prophet, William M. Branham was ardently opposed to the concept of organized religion. He taught that the Roman Catholic church was the mother prostitute of Revelation 17 and all subsequent Christian denominations were her prostitute children.¹ He took great pride in the fact that his followers had never formed a denomination around his Message. Although his disciples share the belief that Branham was a major prophet, they exist today as a disjointed scattering of independent churches around the world.

Many of Branham's teachings are vague and contradictory, often being based on his extra-biblical revelations. Because of this and his disdain for organization, many churches today are based on individual pastors' unique and often bizarre interpretations of the Message. They often feel that they and their congregations are the only ones with the correct understanding of God's end time plan.

Their diverse interpretations are due in part to the degree of confidence that the leaders place in Branham's teachings. For example, many believers insist that Branham was a prophet and that God's prophets do not make mistakes. One such disciple could not understand how science could be so wrong to believe that light travels at 186,000 miles per second when Branham once said that the speed of
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The Tucson Tabernacle is the largest Message Church in Arizona. Branham spoke here shortly before his death in December 1965.

Message Pastor Accused of Child Molestation, Mind Control

A Northern Arizona sect leader may spend time in prison, if he isn't raptured first. James L. Jones, 62, pastor of the Spoken Word Tabernacle in Camp Verde, Ariz. was indicted on charges of child molestation but says God will vindicate him.

Two teenage girls were allegedly involved in sexual misconduct with Jones. According to former members, Jones admitted in a sermon in October 1991 to committing adultery. He was arrested shortly thereafter and is now

free on \$100,000 bail. His trial is set for February 1993. Two hundred members left since his confession, but about 80 remain, including the girls and their parents.

The Spoken Word Tabernacle had been located in Glendale, Ariz. before Jones relocated it to Camp Verde. Jones was in Copper Canyon near Camp Verde when he saw a rock that resembled a loaf of bread. He heard a voice tell him to break open the rock,

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light is 18,000 miles per hour.²

Other followers believe he was also human and therefore subject to making occasional mistakes. An adherent to this philosophy wrote, "Now, I am writing as one who certainly believes the [Message] movement has gone too far in exalting William Branham. And, I do not agree with many things he said, but I still recognize a prophetic voice to the church. It is unfortunate that the prophet made certain statements that have been construed by simple believing people to mean more than he meant them."³

Although most Message churches appear to be little more than fringe Pentecostal groups with some strange beliefs, there are many churches that were founded by preachers with their own spin on the Message.

Because of the various interpretations of the Message, there are, at least ten different factions, some as divergent in doctrine from one another as the Message is from mainstream Christianity. Many are very hostile to sister churches that do not subscribe to their "revelations."

Some believe that all members of the bride of Christ are born with two souls. The sinful soul is in control while the godly soul lies dormant, waiting for the person to accept the Message. When he receives the Message, the sinful soul dies (from Ezekiel 18:4) and the godly soul takes over. This is known as the "Two Soul" doctrine.

Another faction believes when Branham was killed in a car accident in 1965, his ministry was left incomplete. Before the rapture takes place, Branham will resurrect and lead a great worldwide revival. A few disciples in this camp even have an airplane prepared for his "return ministry."

Others teach Branham was Christ having come again in human flesh. This is called the "deity doctrine." Many of these followers are baptized in the name of William Branham.⁴

There is also a following that have examined some of Branham's quotations where he alludes to his

youngest son, Joseph, being a prophet. They believe that Joseph has inherited his father's mantle so that he can complete the mission that his father started.⁵ Joseph Branham holds leadership positions in the worldwide distribution of his father's sermons at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

Probably the largest faction of all is known as "Parousia," which is Greek for "coming." This group believes that the Lord made His second coming at the time that Branham preached the Seven Seals in March, 1963. They believe that the rapture is now in progress by way of a higher under-

MESSAGE FACTIONS

Deity Doctrine

Branham was God in the flesh.

Parousia

Jesus' 2nd coming has happened and the rapture is in progress.

Two Soul

Believers have both godly and sinful souls

Spoken Word Tabernacle

Jim Jones is the prophet Joshua

Joseph Branham

Branham's son has the mantle to continue the prophetic ministry.

Return Ministry

Preparing for Branham's resurrection

standing of the Message. There are even those in this group that disagree with each others' beliefs.

As this article is being written, a Message church has police authorities in Camp Verde, Ariz. worried. Former members of the Spoken Word Tabernacle, say Pastor Jim Jones is planning to trigger the rapture by killing his congregation (see related article). Jones, who is no relation to the Jim Jones of Jonestown, Guyana, has refused to comment to the media.

Besides these factions, there are pastors and laypeople alike who claim that they have been granted a prophetic ministry to interpret Branham's Message to any who will listen to them. All of this confusion is a result of those who have left themselves open to the teachings of a man who could perform miracles.

Disciples of the Message say that Branham's "revelations" cannot be understood by mainstream Christians because the Message must be spiritually discerned. But if a teaching is to be truly spiritually discerned, then its basis must be in the Bible.

The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to verify the teachings of Paul and Silas (Acts 17:10-11). The Message believer, on the other hand, uses "spiritual discernment" instead of the Bible to prove any of Branham's unorthodox teachings. In other words, the believer has received his own "revelation" that Branham's "Spoken Word" is true, despite the lack of Biblical support. As a result, spiritual discernment to a Message follower is really a display of faith in Branham's Message, believing it is as much inspired by the Lord as the Bible itself.

God can, and often does demonstrate His awesome power with signs and wonders. But if a man purports to be a prophet and his message cannot be supported by God's written word, then no miraculous event, however great, can confirm his calling. As the apostle Paul has said, "Prove all things, hold on to that which is true." (I Thessalonians 5:21)

NOTES:

1. Branham, William M., *Shalom* (Spoken Word Pub. Jeffersonville, Ind., n.d.) vol. 13, bk. 5, p. 13.
2. Weaver, C. Douglas, *The Healer Prophet: William Marrion Branham*, (Mercer Univ. Press, Macon, Geor., 1987) p. 158-159.
3. Letter by a Message author and former pastor. Nov. 1992. On file.
4. Weaver. p. 156.
5. Weaver. p. 161-163.

and when he did he found his initials inside the rock. This event is what Jones said prompted the relocation.¹

Former members are speaking out against Jones and have been picketing his church. Ken Leake, a former member said, "Jones could inspire church members to act. He's saying it's the Lord's will for this to happen."² Leake is afraid of retaliation from Jones and his church, since leaving because Jones "prophesied" his house would burn down.

Last year Jones said he would be "vindicated" and "free from Egypt" (the world) by December 25, 1992. Some former members interpreted it to mean he was predicting the rapture. Others feared he would trigger the rapture by poisoning members during their Christmas communion service. Similar to the mass suicide of the infamous Jim Jones of the People's Temple. Over 900 followers died when they drank cyanide-laced Kool-Aid in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978.

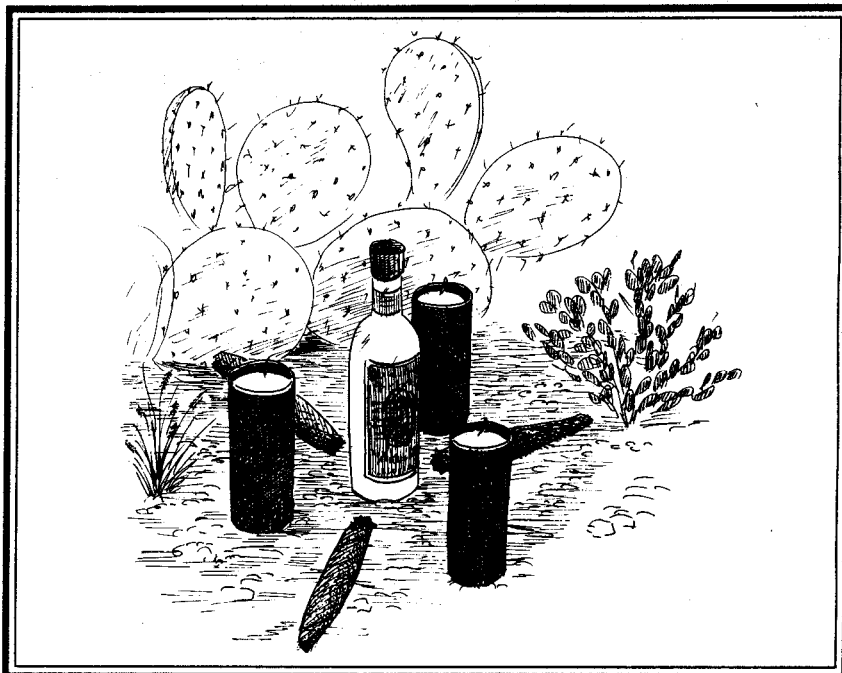
But church-goers weren't raptured and no one was poisoned at the other Jim Jones' church in Camp Verde this past Christmas. Jones' church is not typical of Message churches, but both have similarities in theology.

Branham is called Elijah and the prophet of Malachi 4:5, 6. Similarly, Jones claims he has the spirit of Joshua and is the prophet mentioned in Zechariah 5.³ Both have also claimed angelic visitations.

Fear is also a part of Jones' church. "I'm a prophet of God. Touch not God's anointed lest you perish," Jones is reported to have screamed at his congregation. Karen Thomas, a member for 14 years, said "I've been deceived. He uses fear and brain washes you."²

Public Safety Officer, [REDACTED], allegedly perished because she gave Jones a traffic ticket. Two months after citing Jones, [REDACTED] died. The police officer shot and killed her children before turning the gun on herself in a tragic homicide-suicide over a divorce.

Jones thanked God from the pulpit for her death. "Thank you, Lord! Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord."³



Santeria Altar Discovered in Tucson

Three red votive candles around an unopened bottle of St. Thomas Rum (from the Virgin Islands) with three cigars comprise this simple offering to a Santeria spirit. This altar was found in the desert by a CAF member. Santeria is a type of witchcraft found on Cuba and other Caribbean islands. It has been called a cross between Voodoo and Catholicism because it is occultic, yet worships Catholic saints.

Some sects of Santeria sacrifice animals and humans. A sect called, "Palo Mayombe" was responsible for sacrificing a dozen Texas college students in Matamoros, Mexico in 1989. Another Santeria sect called the Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, has sued the city of Hialeah, Fla. for preventing them from practicing animal sacrifices (usually chickens). This case is now before the U.S. Supreme Court.

According to experts, cult leaders often install fears that God or other members will retaliate against members that defect. This technique keeps many people in these sects from leaving, because they fear for themselves and their families.

NOTES:

1. Winton, Ben, "Fear of 'rapture' massacre grows." The Phoenix Gazette. Dec. 2, 1992
2. Escoffier, Wendy, "Spoken Word Tabernacle came to area 3 years ago." Verde Independent. Dec. 4, 1992.
3. Winton, Ben. "Preaching Vengeance." The Phoenix Gazette. Dec. 10, 1992

Previous issues of The SERVANT are available for any donation.

Fall 1991: Discipling and the Tucson Church of Christ, Wiccans Gather in Tucson, LDS Profits.

Winter 1992: The Message of William Branham part 1, Cult Update: LDS-Satanic Conspiracy, Adventist Splinter Group, Boston Church of Christ, In the Beginning.

September 1992: Biosphere 2- Space Age or New Age?, New Agers Converge On Sedona, So. Baptists Study Freemasonry, The Message of William Branham part 2.

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(602) 690-1299

P. O. Box 35335

Tucson, AZ 85740-5335

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