

THE RETURN OF THE LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT

BOOKLET FIVE

WILLIAM BRANHAM AND THE HEALING REVIVAL

Miracles, Prophetic Claims,
and Doctrinal Controversy



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Foundational Scriptures: Matthew 7:15–23; Mark 16:17–20; Acts 8:9–24; Acts 17:10–11; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 1 Corinthians 14:29; Galatians 1:6–9; 1 John 4:1; Jude 3.

Central Truth: The genuine power of God must never be confused with the personal authority of a religious leader. Miracles, reported healings, visions, and prophetic claims must be examined in the light of Scripture. No supernatural experience authorizes anyone to change the gospel or establish doctrines beyond the Word of God.

INTRODUCTION

From Zion City to the Postwar Healing Revival

In our previous study, we examined the ministry of John Alexander Dowie, his emphasis upon divine healing, his establishment of Zion City, and his extraordinary claims concerning prophetic and apostolic authority.

We also examined documented connections between Dowie's movement and individuals who later participated in early Pentecostalism.

Among those individuals was F. F. Bosworth, whose ministry would eventually bring him into association with one of the most influential healing evangelists of the twentieth century.

That evangelist was William Marrion Branham.

During the years following World War II, large healing campaigns attracted enormous attention throughout North America and beyond.

Thousands gathered to hear evangelists preach salvation, pray for the sick, and testify concerning supernatural manifestations.

Among the best-known figures were William Branham, Oral Roberts, Jack Coe, and A. A. Allen.

These ministers did not share identical doctrines, methods, or organizational relationships.

Nevertheless, they participated in a broad religious environment commonly described as the postwar healing revival.

Branham occupied a particularly important place within that environment.

His campaigns began attracting widespread attention in 1946, shortly before the Latter Rain revival emerged in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, in 1948.

His ministry was known for reports of divine healing, claims of supernatural discernment, and accounts of an angelic visitation.

His supporters regarded him as a man unusually gifted by God.

His critics raised questions concerning his claims, the verification of reported miracles, and teachings that increasingly departed from established Pentecostal doctrine.

Our purpose is not to deny divine healing.

Neither is it to declare that every person who testified of receiving help through Branham's ministry was dishonest or mistaken.

We must distinguish between reported experiences, documented events, and the doctrinal conclusions attached to them.

The central question is whether Branham's teachings and claims remained subject to the authority of Scripture.

This study will also examine his relationship to the 1948 Latter Rain revival.

That relationship is historically important, but it must not be exaggerated.

The healing revival and the New Order of the Latter Rain were distinct developments, even though individuals and ideas moved between their religious environments.

1. WILLIAM BRANHAM — HIS EARLY LIFE

William Marrion Branham was born on April 6, 1909, in Kentucky.

His family subsequently moved to Indiana, where he spent much of his life.

Branham grew up in difficult economic circumstances.

His accounts of childhood frequently emphasized poverty, hardship, and unusual spiritual experiences.

He later described visions and supernatural occurrences that he believed had begun early in his life.

These accounts became important elements of the story he told concerning his calling.

Branham entered Christian ministry during the 1930s and became associated with Pentecostal religious circles.

His early ministerial development included contact with churches and believers whose teachings differed in certain respects.

Over time, he developed a distinctive understanding of his calling and spiritual experiences.

It is important to recognize that Branham's later accounts of his early life were often delivered many years after the events described.

Historical study must therefore distinguish between contemporary documentation and retrospective personal testimony.

A minister's recollection may be sincere without every detail being historically verified.

The same standard should apply to every religious leader.

Our faith must not depend upon the assumption that every autobiographical account is infallible.

2. THE BEGINNING OF HIS HEALING CAMPAIGNS

The year 1946 became especially important in the public development of Branham's healing ministry.

During that period, his campaigns began attracting attention beyond his local religious environment.

Large audiences gathered to hear his preaching and witness prayers for the sick.

Branham's meetings became known for accounts of healing and supernatural discernment.

Supporters reported that he could identify illnesses or personal circumstances through spiritual revelation.

Such reports contributed to his growing reputation.

His ministry attracted the attention of other Pentecostal ministers who were interested in divine healing and evangelism.

The timing was significant.

World War II had recently ended.

Many people were searching for spiritual renewal, personal hope, and assurance of God's continuing power.

Healing evangelists presented their ministries as demonstrations that the supernatural works recorded in the New Testament remained available to the church.

Scripture certainly teaches that God is able to heal.

James 5:14–15 (KJV)

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

But the biblical promise of God's power does not establish the accuracy of every healing testimony.

Neither does it prove that every person claiming supernatural gifts possesses divine authority.

The church must believe the Word of God without surrendering its responsibility to examine extraordinary claims.

3. THE CLAIM OF AN ANGELIC VISITATION

One of the most significant elements of Branham's ministry was his account of an angelic visitation.

He publicly described an encounter that he dated to May 7, 1946.

According to his testimony, an angel appeared to him and explained aspects of his calling to pray for the sick.

Branham associated this experience with the development of his healing ministry.

His accounts described supernatural signs that would accompany his ministry.

These included physical sensations that he interpreted as indications of illness and revelations concerning the circumstances of individuals.

Such claims became central to the public presentation of his ministry.

However, an important distinction must be maintained.

The fact that Branham reported an angelic visitation is historically documentable.

Whether the visitation occurred exactly as he described, and whether the being was genuinely sent by God, are separate questions.

Scripture records genuine angelic visitations.

But it also warns that supernatural appearances must not be accepted uncritically.

Galatians 1:8 (KJV)

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Paul did not teach that an angelic appearance automatically establishes divine authority.

He taught that even an angelic messenger must not introduce a different gospel.

This is a foundational principle of biblical discernment.

No supernatural experience possesses authority to contradict the revelation already given in Scripture.

The test is not simply whether a minister claims to have encountered an angel.

The test is whether the message and doctrine remain faithful to the Word of God.

4. SUPERNATURAL DISCERNMENT AND THE HEALING LINES

Branham's healing meetings became particularly associated with what supporters described as supernatural discernment.

Individuals would come forward for prayer.

Branham sometimes announced details concerning their physical conditions or personal circumstances.

Supporters interpreted these disclosures as manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit.

The New Testament does teach that the Holy Ghost distributes spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:7–11 (KJV)

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

These gifts belong to the operation of the Holy Ghost.

They are not personal possessions that place a minister beyond correction.

Nor does the manifestation of a gift establish that every doctrinal statement made by the individual is correct.

The Corinthian church possessed spiritual gifts while still requiring substantial doctrinal and practical correction.

This is a vital distinction.

A congregation may experience genuine spiritual manifestations and still require instruction.

A minister may be used in prayer for the sick and still hold mistaken beliefs.

The church must never substitute amazement for discernment.

5. F. F. BOSWORTH — A BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO HEALING MOVEMENTS

The connection between William Branham and F. F. Bosworth is especially important to our historical study.

As we examined in Booklet Four, Bosworth had been associated with John Alexander Dowie's religious community at Zion City.

He later participated in early Pentecostal ministry and became widely known for teaching divine healing.

His book *Christ the Healer* became an influential work on the subject.

Bosworth subsequently participated in Branham's healing campaigns.

This creates an identifiable historical connection between the earlier divine healing environment associated with Dowie and the postwar healing revival associated with Branham.

However, we must be precise concerning what this relationship demonstrates.

It establishes that an individual shaped by an earlier healing movement became involved in a later one.

It also demonstrates continuity in the emphasis upon prayer for the sick and divine healing.

It does not establish that Branham accepted all of Dowie's teachings.

Nor does it prove that Dowie's claims concerning Elijah the Restorer or the First Apostle were transmitted directly to Branham through Bosworth.

Historical connections must be examined rather than assumed.

Nevertheless, Bosworth's participation helps explain how healing traditions crossed organizational and generational boundaries.

The development of the healing revival did not occur in isolation.

It emerged within a religious environment shaped by earlier Pentecostal, holiness, and divine healing movements.

6. GORDON LINDSAY AND THE VOICE OF HEALING

Another significant figure in Branham's ministry was Gordon Lindsay.

Lindsay became closely associated with the organization and promotion of Branham's campaigns.

He possessed administrative and publishing abilities that helped expand the reach of the healing revival.

In April 1948, *The Voice of Healing* began publication.

Its early issues were closely connected with Branham's campaigns.

The publication included reports of healing meetings, testimonies, articles concerning divine healing, and information about participating evangelists.

Over time, its scope broadened to include numerous healing ministries.

The publication became an important means of connecting evangelists, supporters, and audiences.

This development is historically significant.

A movement can grow not only through preaching but also through organized communication.

Publications can spread testimonies, reinforce expectations, and establish the reputation of religious leaders.

They can also influence how events are interpreted.

For this reason, contemporary religious publications are valuable historical sources, but they must be read critically.

A magazine published to promote a healing ministry provides evidence of what the movement claimed and taught.

It does not automatically provide independent verification of every miracle reported.

The distinction between documenting a claim and verifying the claim is essential.

7. THE BROADER POSTWAR HEALING REVIVAL

Branham was not the only influential evangelist in the healing revival.

Oral Roberts, Jack Coe, A. A. Allen, and numerous other ministers conducted healing campaigns during the postwar years.

Some developed large organizations.

Others traveled extensively through tent meetings and church-sponsored campaigns.

Their methods and doctrines varied.

The movement included both cooperation and competition.

Publications and conventions created opportunities for evangelists to meet and exchange ideas.

Reports of extraordinary healings encouraged widespread interest.

Many believers regarded the movement as evidence that God was restoring neglected aspects of New Testament ministry.

Others expressed concern about sensationalism, questionable claims, financial practices, and doctrinal irregularities.

Both the religious enthusiasm and the concerns surrounding the movement belong to its history.

The existence of controversy does not prove that every reported spiritual experience was false.

Likewise, the existence of enthusiastic testimonies does not establish that every teaching was biblical.

The church must examine both claims and criticisms fairly.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

This instruction is especially relevant when examining a movement known for extraordinary spiritual claims.

8. BRANHAM, THE 1947 VANCOUVER MEETINGS, AND NORTH BATTLEFORD

The relationship between Branham's ministry and the 1948 Latter Rain revival deserves careful attention.

One of the clearest documented connections occurred in Vancouver, British Columbia, in November 1947.

During that month, William Branham conducted a series of healing meetings that attracted considerable attention among Pentecostal ministers and believers.

The meetings were associated with the organizational work of Gordon Lindsay.

Ern Baxter, a Canadian Pentecostal minister, also became associated with Branham's campaign team during this period.

Among those who attended the Vancouver meetings were representatives of the religious work centered at Sharon Orphanage and Schools in North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

George Hawtin, one of the principal leaders associated with Sharon, attended the meetings and was deeply impressed by what he witnessed.

This is not merely a connection proposed by later historians.

A contemporary report appeared in the January 1, 1948, issue of *The Sharon Star*, the publication associated with the North Battleford work.

The report described Branham's Vancouver campaign in enthusiastic terms.

Its author testified to witnessing what he believed were extraordinary manifestations of divine healing.

The report also expressed a renewed conviction concerning the power and operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

This contemporary publication is important because it documents the influence of Branham's meetings upon the Sharon religious environment before the North Battleford revival began.

It demonstrates that interest in Branham's ministry was not simply attributed to Sharon leaders decades afterward.

The connection was being discussed in their own publication at the time.

George Hawtin and the Sharon Leadership

George Hawtin was a central figure in the development of the North Battleford revival.

He had been involved in Pentecostal Bible school ministry before becoming associated with the work at Sharon.

Alongside other leaders, including Percy G. Hunt and Herrick Holt, he participated in the development of the religious community and school that became the center of the 1948 revival.

His brother, Ernest Hawtin, commonly known as Ern Hawtin, also became an important participant in the movement.

Ern Hawtin was particularly associated with prophetic ministry as the revival developed.

The historical record clearly establishes the participation of George and Ern Hawtin in the North Battleford movement.

George Hawtin's attendance at the Vancouver campaign is particularly well documented.

Although accounts describe representatives of the Sharon work attending Branham's meetings, the precise attendance of every individual leader should not be assumed without specific evidence.

This distinction is important because careful history must not turn a documented group connection into an unsupported claim about every person associated with that group.

From Vancouver to North Battleford

Following the Vancouver meetings, leaders associated with Sharon pursued a period of intensified prayer, fasting, and expectation concerning the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

They believed that the church needed a renewed experience of the spiritual power described in the New Testament.

The religious environment at Sharon was already influenced by Pentecostal teaching, restorationist expectations, and interest in divine healing.

The Vancouver campaign contributed to those expectations.

In February 1948, revival meetings at Sharon became associated with prophecy, the laying on of hands, and claims concerning the impartation of spiritual gifts.

The revival subsequently developed into what became known as the New Order of the Latter Rain.

Its distinctive teachings included an emphasis upon restored spiritual ministries, prophetic direction, and the impartation of gifts through the laying on of hands.

The connection with Branham's ministry helps explain the atmosphere of expectation preceding these developments.

However, the teachings that emerged at Sharon must be examined in their own historical and doctrinal setting.

Influence Does Not Mean Organizational Identity

Branham did not establish Sharon Bible College.

He was not the founder of the New Order of the Latter Rain.

Nor should the distinctive doctrines of the North Battleford movement automatically be attributed to him.

The healing revival and the New Order of the Latter Rain were separate religious developments.

They overlapped in time.

They shared an interest in divine healing, supernatural ministry, and spiritual renewal.

Certain individuals moved between their religious environments.

But they were not identical organizations, and they did not possess one uniform doctrinal system.

This distinction matters because later historical accounts sometimes combine separate movements into a single continuous organization.

The evidence requires a more careful approach.

The November 1947 Vancouver meetings provide a meaningful and documented connection between Branham's healing ministry and the expectations of the Sharon leadership.

The January 1948 report in *The Sharon Star* helps establish that connection through a contemporary source.

But it does not prove that Branham personally directed the February 1948 revival or authored every teaching that subsequently emerged.

The proper historical conclusion is that **Branham's healing campaigns were an important influence upon the religious environment from which the**

New Order of the Latter Rain emerged, while the movement itself developed through its own leaders and institutions.

This distinction will become increasingly important as we examine the teachings that Pentecostal leaders rejected in 1949.

9. FROM HEALING EVANGELIST TO PROPHETIC AUTHORITY

One of the most important developments in Branham's ministry was the increasing emphasis upon his personal prophetic identity.

His public reputation had initially been built largely around healing campaigns and supernatural discernment.

Over time, his preaching placed greater emphasis upon prophetic revelation and his role in God's end-time purposes.

Branham came to associate his ministry with biblical prophecies concerning Elijah and the restoration of the church.

This development invites comparison with John Alexander Dowie.

Both ministers became known for divine healing.

Both attracted followers who believed that God was restoring neglected biblical truths.

Both eventually became associated with extraordinary claims concerning prophetic identity.

However, similarity does not prove direct transmission of a doctrine from one individual to another.

The important issue is the recurring pattern.

A ministry begins with a biblical emphasis.

The leader gains a reputation for supernatural power.

That reputation becomes increasingly associated with a unique personal calling.

Eventually, the leader's interpretation of prophecy may become central to the movement's identity.

At that point, the church must ask whether the leader is still directing believers to Scripture or is making his own revelations necessary for understanding Scripture.

The difference is fundamental.

10. BRANHAM'S CLAIMS CONCERNING ELIJAH AND THE END TIME

In his later ministry, Branham increasingly identified his calling with the promised Elijah ministry associated with the restoration of all things.

He interpreted passages such as Malachi 4:5–6 in relation to an end-time messenger.

His followers subsequently developed teachings identifying him with that prophetic role.

The New Testament provides important guidance.

Luke 1:17 (KJV)

"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The angel applied Elijah-like language to the ministry of John the Baptist.

Jesus also identified John in relation to the promised Elijah.

Matthew 11:13–14 (KJV)

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."

Christians have differed concerning whether Malachi contains additional future implications.

However, the existence of differing prophetic interpretations does not authorize a modern minister to declare himself the fulfillment of a unique prophetic office.

Such a claim requires biblical justification.

The church must not allow a minister's personal testimony to become the final authority for interpreting prophecy.

Scripture must interpret Scripture.

No individual's supposed prophetic identity should become necessary to establish the authority of Jesus Christ or the gospel.

11. THE SERPENT SEED TEACHING

Among Branham's most controversial doctrines was his interpretation of the events in the Garden of Eden.

He taught a doctrine commonly called the *serpent seed* teaching.

In this interpretation, the serpent's deception of Eve involved a sexual relationship, and Cain's origin was connected to that relationship rather than to Adam.

This teaching departed from the ordinary reading of Genesis and became an important element of Branham's later doctrinal system.

The biblical text must be examined carefully.

Genesis 4:1 (KJV)

"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD."

The passage explicitly identifies Adam's relationship with Eve in connection with Cain's birth.

Scripture does not teach that the serpent fathered Cain.

Nor does it establish a hidden biological lineage through which sin entered humanity.

The New Testament identifies Adam's disobedience as central to the entrance of sin into the world.

Romans 5:12 (KJV)

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

Branham's serpent seed teaching illustrates the danger of building doctrine upon speculative interpretations.

An interpretation may appear to reveal a hidden mystery.

But novelty is not evidence of truth.

The question is whether Scripture actually teaches the doctrine.

When an interpretation requires believers to reject the plain statements of Scripture, it must be rejected.

12. THE SEVEN CHURCH AGES AND PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION

Branham also developed an elaborate interpretation of the seven churches addressed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

He associated these churches with successive periods of Christian history.

He identified particular religious figures with various church ages.

He further connected the final church age with his understanding of an end-time messenger.

Interpretations of the seven churches as representing successive historical periods existed before Branham.

He did not originate the general idea of church ages.

However, his specific identifications and prophetic applications became distinctive features of his teaching.

The difficulty arises when an interpretive framework is treated as divine revelation rather than as a human interpretation requiring examination.

Revelation contains messages to seven actual churches.

Those messages certainly contain instruction for believers beyond their immediate historical setting.

But the text does not explicitly identify William Branham as the messenger to the final church age.

A doctrine cannot become binding upon the church simply because a minister claims supernatural insight into prophetic symbolism.

The authority belongs to Scripture.

It does not belong to the interpreter.

13. THE SEVEN SEALS AND CLAIMS OF REVEALED MYSTERIES

In 1963, Branham delivered a series of sermons concerning the seven seals of Revelation.

He presented these teachings as involving significant supernatural revelation.

His followers came to regard the sermons as central to his end-time message.

The opening of the seals in Revelation is a serious biblical subject.

It concerns the authority of Jesus Christ and the unfolding of God's purposes.

Revelation 5:5 (KJV)

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

The passage identifies Jesus Christ as the One worthy to open the sealed book.

The authority belongs to Him.

A modern preacher may study and explain Revelation.

He may compare passages and offer interpretations.

But he cannot establish his interpretation as infallible merely by claiming angelic assistance or supernatural revelation.

The church must remain free to examine every interpretation against the written Word.

Whenever a movement teaches that its founder possesses a uniquely necessary revelation of biblical mysteries, believers should carefully examine the authority being claimed.

The Holy Ghost leads believers into truth.

He does not require the church to surrender its responsibility to search the Scriptures.

14. BRANHAM'S TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD AND THE ONENESS OF GOD

Branham's teachings concerning the Godhead require particular care.

He rejected traditional Trinitarian formulations and frequently emphasized that God is one.

He also used language concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost that resembled some expressions found in Oneness Pentecostalism.

However, Branham's overall doctrinal system should not be equated automatically with classical Oneness Pentecostal teaching.

His teachings developed within a broader collection of prophetic interpretations, restorationist claims, and distinctive doctrines.

The biblical doctrine of the oneness of God must stand upon Scripture independently of Branham's ministry.

Deuteronomy 6:4 (KJV)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:"

Colossians 2:9 (KJV)

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

These passages establish important biblical truths concerning God and His revelation in Jesus Christ.

But agreement with a minister on one doctrinal point does not validate his entire system of teaching.

A person may correctly emphasize the oneness of God while promoting other teachings that lack biblical support.

Likewise, rejecting Branham's prophetic claims does not require rejecting biblical Oneness doctrine.

The truth of God's Word does not depend upon the reputation of any modern evangelist.

This distinction is particularly important for Apostolic believers.

We must not allow the history of a controversial religious leader to become the foundation of our doctrine.

Our foundation is Jesus Christ and the teaching of His apostles.

15. THE PROBLEM OF FAILED OR DISPUTED PROPHECIES

Branham made numerous statements concerning future events and the end time.

Some were presented as prophetic expectations, while others were associated with claims of divine revelation.

His statements concerning events expected around 1977 have been especially debated.

A responsible historical examination must distinguish between a prediction, an expectation, and an explicitly claimed revelation.

Those distinctions matter.

It would be inaccurate to present every statement about the future as though it were an identical prophetic declaration.

Nevertheless, when a minister repeatedly associates his predictions with divine authority, those claims must be examined.

Deuteronomy 18:22 (KJV)

"When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

The passage establishes a serious standard concerning claims made in the name of God.

A minister should not claim divine certainty for statements that Scripture does not authorize.

Nor should followers be required to reinterpret every failed expectation in order to preserve the reputation of a religious leader.

The Word of God must remain above the individual.

Historical claims about specific prophecies should be examined using the original sermons and their dates rather than relying exclusively upon summaries written by supporters or critics.

16. WHEN A MINISTRY BECOMES A MESSAGE CENTERED UPON ITS LEADER

After Branham's death, groups of followers continued to circulate his recorded sermons and teachings.

Some came to describe their religious identity in terms of believing or following *the Message*.

For many adherents, Branham's sermons occupied an unusually authoritative position in their understanding of Christian doctrine.

The precise beliefs of these groups vary.

Not every person influenced by Branham holds identical views.

Nevertheless, the development raises an important question.

What happens when the recorded teachings of a deceased minister become the controlling interpretive authority for a religious community?

The New Testament directs believers to continue in the apostles' doctrine.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The church was not instructed to organize its faith around the supposedly indispensable revelation of a later preacher.

Pastors and teachers serve the church by explaining and applying the Word of God.

They do not become a second foundation.

The test is whether believers are being led into a deeper understanding of Scripture or into dependence upon a particular personality's interpretations.

17. THE DEATH OF WILLIAM BRANHAM AND HIS CONTINUING INFLUENCE

William Branham was seriously injured in an automobile accident in December 1965.

He died on December 24, 1965.

His death brought an end to his personal evangelistic ministry.

However, his influence continued through recordings, publications, followers, and organizations devoted to preserving his teachings.

His historical significance extends beyond his lifetime.

He was an influential figure in the postwar healing revival.

His campaigns helped shape expectations concerning supernatural ministry.

His teachings also contributed to later debates concerning prophecy, divine healing, spiritual authority, and end-time restoration.

Some individuals influenced by the broader healing revival went on to participate in other Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

But we must continue to distinguish historical influence from complete doctrinal agreement.

Branham's influence upon a person or movement does not establish that every later teaching originated with him.

Neither does similarity between movements prove a direct organizational relationship.

These distinctions will remain important as our series examines later developments.

18. WHAT CAN THE CHURCH LEARN FROM WILLIAM BRANHAM?

Branham's history provides several important lessons.

Divine Healing Is Biblical, but Healing Claims Must Be Examined

We should pray for the sick and believe that God is able to heal.

However, reported miracles must not become substitutes for biblical truth.

Spiritual Gifts Do Not Make a Minister Infallible

- The Holy Ghost distributes gifts according to His will. The operation of a spiritual gift does not place a person beyond doctrinal correction.

Angelic Claims Do Not Establish New Doctrine

- Even a claimed angelic visitation must be examined according to the gospel already revealed. No supernatural messenger may introduce another gospel.

Prophetic Identity Must Be Established by Scripture

- A minister cannot become Elijah, an end-time messenger, or a uniquely authoritative interpreter simply by declaring that God revealed the position to him.

Historical Influence Is Not the Same as Doctrinal Continuity

- Branham's relationship with the healing revival and the religious environment surrounding North Battleford is historically significant. The November 1947 Vancouver meetings and the contemporary report in *The Sharon Star* help establish that influence. But the movements must not be treated as identical.

The Oneness of God Does Not Depend Upon Branham

- The biblical revelation of the one God in Jesus Christ must be established from Scripture. It does not depend upon accepting Branham's prophetic claims or distinctive doctrines.

The Church Must Remain Centered Upon Jesus Christ

- No evangelist, however influential, should become the indispensable foundation of Christian faith. The church belongs to Jesus Christ.

19. THE FINAL TEST IS THE WORD OF GOD

The history of William Branham raises questions that remain relevant today.

How should the church respond to reports of extraordinary healing?

How should believers evaluate claims of angelic visitation?

What happens when a minister's prophetic identity becomes central to a movement?

Can spiritual gifts establish doctrinal authority?

Can a preacher's interpretation of biblical prophecy become binding upon every believer?

The New Testament provides clear principles.

1 John 4:1 (KJV)

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Believers are commanded to test spiritual claims.

They are not instructed to accept every supernatural report.

Acts 17:11 (KJV)

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The Bereans examined the teaching they received.

They did not treat examination as rebellion.

They regarded the Scriptures as the standard.

That must remain our practice.

The church should welcome the genuine work of the Holy Ghost.

It should pray for the sick.

It should exercise spiritual gifts according to Scripture.

It should expect God to answer prayer.

But it must never permit supernatural claims to replace biblical authority.

CONCLUSION

From Healing Campaigns to Claims of End-Time Revelation

William Branham became one of the most prominent figures of the postwar healing revival.

His campaigns attracted widespread attention through reports of divine healing and supernatural discernment.

His ministry developed within a religious environment shaped by earlier Pentecostal and divine healing movements.

His association with F. F. Bosworth provides a documented connection to the healing traditions that had developed around John Alexander Dowie and Zion City.

His association with Gordon Lindsay and *The Voice of Healing* contributed to the organization and expansion of the postwar healing revival.

The November 1947 healing meetings in Vancouver provide another important historical connection.

George Hawtin and other representatives of the Sharon religious environment encountered Branham's ministry during this period.

The January 1, 1948, issue of *The Sharon Star* documented the impression those meetings made upon the North Battleford leadership.

The revival that emerged at Sharon in February 1948 developed its own teachings and organizational identity.

Branham did not found the North Battleford movement, and the two movements must remain historically distinct.

Nevertheless, his healing campaigns contributed to the atmosphere of expectation concerning spiritual gifts and supernatural ministry that preceded the revival.

As his own ministry developed, Branham increasingly emphasized claims concerning prophetic identity, supernatural revelation, and end-time mysteries.

His teachings concerning the serpent seed, the seven church ages, and the seven seals became distinctive features of his religious message.

These developments illustrate the danger of moving from a biblical emphasis upon divine healing to an increasingly authoritative system centered upon a minister's personal revelations.

The lesson is not that the church should reject miracles.

The lesson is that miracles must never replace Scripture as the standard of truth.

The church does not need a modern prophet whose revelations become necessary for understanding the gospel.

It needs faithful ministers who preach Jesus Christ and remain subject to His Word.

The genuine work of the Holy Ghost will never require the church to abandon the doctrine delivered by the apostles.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your Word and for the continuing power of the Holy Ghost.

We thank You that You are still able to heal the sick, answer prayer, and strengthen Your church.

Help us to believe Your promises without surrendering our responsibility to examine spiritual claims.

Give us wisdom to distinguish between genuine manifestations of Your Spirit and teachings that go beyond Scripture.

Protect us from placing our confidence in religious personalities, extraordinary testimonies, or claims of supernatural revelation.

Help pastors to preach Your Word faithfully and to lead Your people with humility and accountability.

Teach every believer to search the Scriptures and to remain steadfast in the apostles' doctrine.

May we never allow the reputation of a minister to become greater in our hearts than the authority of Jesus Christ.

Keep us faithful to the gospel.

Fill Your church with truth, holiness, love, and the genuine power of the Holy Ghost.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

HISTORICAL SOURCES AND FURTHER STUDY

1. **David Edwin Harrell Jr.** *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America*. Indiana University Press, 1975. Historical study of the postwar healing revival, including William Branham and Gordon Lindsay.
2. **Gordon Lindsay.** *A Man Sent from God*. Contemporary sympathetic account of Branham's early ministry. Useful as evidence of how his ministry was presented to supporters, while requiring critical evaluation.
3. **The Voice of Healing.** Issues beginning April 1948. Contemporary accounts of healing campaigns, Branham's ministry, and the development of the broader healing revival.
4. **William Branham.** Recorded sermons and published transcripts, including his accounts of angelic visitation, the seven church ages, and the seven seals. Primary sources for establishing what Branham actually taught.

5. **F. F. Bosworth.** *Christ the Healer*. Historical work on divine healing by a minister associated with both the earlier Pentecostal healing tradition and Branham's campaigns.
6. **Richard M. Riss.** *Latter Rain: The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Evangelical Awakening*. Historical research concerning the North Battleford revival and its wider religious setting.
7. **The Sharon Star.** January 1, 1948, issue. Contemporary report concerning William Branham's November 1947 Vancouver healing campaign and its influence upon representatives of the Sharon religious work.
8. **Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.** Archival collections and historical publications concerning Pentecostalism, divine healing, the Sharon revival, and twentieth-century revival movements.
9. **Historical studies of George Hawtin, Ern Hawtin, Percy G. Hunt, and Herrick Holt.** Research concerning the leadership of Sharon Orphanage and Schools and the emergence of the New Order of the Latter Rain.
10. **Historical studies of Gordon Lindsay and the postwar healing revival.** Research concerning the development of *The Voice of Healing*, revival networks, and the expansion of healing evangelism.
11. **Contemporary newspapers and campaign records.** Sources for examining the dates, locations, attendance claims, and public reception of Branham's meetings, including the 1947 Vancouver campaign.
12. **Historical studies of William Branham's later teachings and continuing influence.** Research concerning prophetic identity, the serpent seed doctrine, church-age interpretations, and the development of communities centered upon his recorded sermons.

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Divine Healing: James 5:14–16; Mark 16:17–20; Acts 3:1–16; 1 Corinthians 12:7–11.

Testing Spiritual Claims: Deuteronomy 13:1–5; Deuteronomy 18:20–22; Matthew 7:15–23; 1 John 4:1–6.

Angels and the Gospel: Galatians 1:6–9; 2 Corinthians 11:13–15; Hebrews 1:1–4.

Prophecy and Spiritual Gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 1 Corinthians 14:26–33; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22.

Elijah and Biblical Prophecy: Malachi 4:5–6; Luke 1:16–17; Matthew 11:13–14; Matthew 17:10–13.

The Oneness of God: Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 9:6; John 14:6–11; Colossians 2:8–10.

The Foundation of the Church: Matthew 16:13–18; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 3:10–11; Jude 3.