

# Paul as Prophet-Messenger

## Revelation 2:1

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

The angel to the church of Ephesus was the apostle Paul. Bro. Branham identifies Paul as a New Testament prophet, which is frequently disputed both by Christians in denominations and by former Message believers. The purpose this evening is to show

- a) the difficulties Paul encountered in getting people to recognize the position God had given him
- b) the allusions Paul makes to Old Testament prophets as he establishes his own prophetic authority
- c) the struggles people have today to accept the prophetic authority of Bro. Branham are similar to the struggles people had in the first century with Paul's authority.

## The Church Age Book, p. 76, 78

The messenger (angel) to the church of Ephesus was the apostle Paul. That he was the messenger to the first age of the Gentile era cannot be denied. Though to Peter was granted the authority to open the doors to the Gentiles, it was given to Paul to be their apostle and prophet. He was the Prophet-Messenger to the Gentiles. His prophetic office, by which he received the full revelation of the Word for the Gentiles, authenticated him as their apostolic messenger. Paul founded the church at Ephesus about the middle of the first century. This enables us to set the date of the beginning of the Ephesian Church Age; about 53 A.D.

His manner of ministering set the pattern that all future messengers were to aspire to, and actually sets the pattern for every true minister of God, though he would not attain to such heights in the prophetic realm as did Paul.

## Review: keys to understanding the church ages

The keystone of the Bible is the truth of an unchanging God with unchanging ways.

The church at Pentecost is the pattern for all future churches to match and Paul's ministry is the basis for judging other ministries (see pp. 77-81)

- Absolutely true to the Word; he was led by no one but the Holy Spirit
- His ministry was in the power of the Spirit, demonstrating the spoken and written Word
- He had the evident fruit of a God-given ministry

The slightly less glorious second key is that there are two vines running through the church. Satan is a masterful impersonator, and he uses the false vine to distract and confuse from the true work that God is doing. (See "The Second Seal," pp.183-184)

THE.SECOND.SEAL\_ JEFF.IN TUESDAY\_ 63-0319

183-1 {40} Now, in the last days we are--it's predicted to us that there will rise a--a prophet. Now, we know that we've had all kinds... Now, I realize after looking around tonight, I--I'm speaking here where students are setting, and I--I'd like for you to understand me. And you realize these tapes cover the world (See?), just about all the world. And I'd want you to, not by no mean, think that I am trying to inject some kind of a--a cult of Elijah's blankets or robes and oh, all those things we've had plenty of them. But you know all those things are only a forerunning of the real thing that is to come to throw the people off.

183-3 {43} Now, see, **Satan raises those up**. Watch the shrewdness of this fellow that we're talking about here, Satan, where we're unfolding him right here, just stripping him down by the Scriptures and letting you see who he is....

184-2 {50} But then when the real true servant comes on—with all the impersonation to it, to upset the peoples' mind. **Satan does that. And those who can't discern right from wrong, they just stumble over; but the elected won't do it.** The Bible said he wouldn't be able to deceive the elected....

62-0117 PRESUMING\_ PHOENIX.AZ WEDNESDAY\_

30 And I remember when I first come here in Phoenix. We stood over there in Brother Outlaw's church, was the first one invited me to Phoenix. And then there was a little, Mexican church called Garcia, Brother Garcia, little Spanish-speaking

church down somewhere down in there. And what a wonderful time we had in there, and people stand in prayer lines, and being healed, just praying and laying hands on them.

31 The ministry has come higher. Certainly, it has. Gifts has been multiplied. But somehow or another, I wish I was just back like I was at the first place, you see. Just the... See? Yeah. I think, more here. We just forget some of the things they ever learned, I think it would be a lot better off. See?

32 Well, I think the road to God is through the path of humility and service. I think that there's nothing no better in the world, to lift us up to Christ, than that. You get to see carnal impersonations, and so forth, it dulls you and puts something in you. I--I wish it didn't do it, you see. We just... If you just made you... It kind of brings you up. I think it gets you in the state of complex [skepticism], when you should not be there. You should just keep all things away, and move on.

THE.REVELATION.OF.JESUS.CHRIST - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.1, pp.6-7

Now remember this. Christ in the True Church is a continuation of the Book of Acts. But the Book of Revelation shows how that the antichrist spirit would come into the church and defile it, making it lukewarm, formal and powerless. It exposes Satan, revealing his works (attempted destruction of God's people and the discrediting of God's word) right down to the time he is cast into the lake of fire. He fights that. He cannot stand it. He knows that if the people get the TRUE REVELATION of the TRUE CHURCH and what she is, what she stands for and that SHE CAN DO THE GREATER WORKS, she will be an invincible army. **If they get a true revelation of the two spirits within the framework of the Christian church, and by God's Spirit discern and withstand the antichrist spirit, Satan will be powerless before her.** He will be as definitely thwarted today as when Christ withstood his every effort to gain power over Him in the desert. Yes, Satan hates revelation. But we love it. With true revelation in our lives, the gates of hell cannot prevail against us, but we will prevail over them.

“The Ephesian Church Age,” CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3, p.72.

Have you ever studied the history of revivals? Now a revival signifies a move of God in power. And every time God moves, Satan is there to move also. It never fails. In the days of the great Welsh revival (and most people don't know this), the insane asylums filled up quickly, and there was a great display of devil power to take away the attention from God. It is written that in Wesley's day the people would do most peculiar things that were definitely of Satan to try to mock the goodness and power of God. In Luther's day it is said that the miracle of his ministry did not lie in the fact that he successfully protested the Roman Catholic Church, but the miracle lay in the fact he could, and did, stay sound and sane amidst the fanatics who were often filled with, and guided by, wrong spirits. And if you have been aware of this last day ministry, you will have noted the same invasion of false and wicked spirits. It has to be that way. **Now I hope and trust you are spiritual minded enough to get that, and capitalize on it.**

## How Paul's hearers viewed his authority

Paul's authority was frequently questioned during his ministry, even though it is accepted by anyone today who considers himself a Christian. Consider how Paul's claims must have come across to his first century hearers!

After Paul's first missionary trip (into Galatia), other men from Judea followed in his tracks teaching another gospel, which included adherence to the Law (Acts 15:1).

- The Galatians were quickly moved from their belief in the gospel he brought (Gal. 1:6-7)
- Paul and Barnabas went to a council at Jerusalem to share what God had done among the Gentiles (Act 15).
- From Luke's account in Acts 15, it appears Paul says little at the Jerusalem Council. His version of the Jerusalem Council and its aftermath is given in Galatians 1-2 (see below).

Among the Corinthians, Paul found perhaps his most critical audience. He spends nearly three chapters in II Corinthians defending his authority and testimony as a messenger of God (II Corinthians 10:8-12:13).

- His ministry of Christ is “not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (II Corinthians 11:5). In I Corinthians 14:37-38, Paul basically lays out a test of someone's self-proclaimed spirituality is whether or not they acknowledge that what he has written is from the Lord.

**I Corinthians 14:37**

<sup>37</sup>If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the

commandments of the Lord.

<sup>38</sup>But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

- His sufferings for the Gospel are surpassed by no one, as also described by Luke in Acts.
- His supernatural experiences of visions and revelations are significant (II Corinthians 12:1-4), as also confirmed by Luke in Acts.

## How did Paul see his own position and authority?

Paul's account of the Jerusalem Council in his letter to the Galatians helps us see how Paul saw his own authority and how he meant it to be seen.

- Led by no one but the Spirit of God (Galatians 1:1, 11-12, 16-17)
- The Gospel he preached to the Galatians is definitive, because it is from Christ Himself (Galatians 1:8-12). Paul remained true to this.

### Galatians 1:8

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.

IS.THIS.THE.SIGN.OF.THE.END.SIR\_ JEFF.IN V-2 N-11 SUNDAY\_ 62-1230E

You see? You see why I'm leaving? You see why I got to go? I must do it. Friends, don't look to me. I'm your brother. Don't pay no attention to me, because I'm just a mortal. I have to die like everybody else. Don't you listen to me, but listen to what I've said. What I've said is the message. Don't pay any attention to the messenger; watch the message. Keep your eyes, not on the messenger, but on the message, what it said. That's the thing to look to; and God help us is my prayer.

Paul echoes writing from Old Testament prophets in declaring his own call. He wants to anchor his calling and position in the Word.

Remember that Saul had studied under Gamaliel and had been extraordinarily zealous of Jewish traditions. When someone as learned as he was makes references or **allusions** to Old Testament scriptures, these are purposeful and significant.

### **Example of allusion's significance: George W. Bush's allusion to an old hymn in the 2003 State of the Union Address:**

"For so many in our country -- the homeless, the fatherless, the addicted -- the need is great. Yet there is power -- wonder-working power -- in the goodness, and idealism, and faith of the American people."

Jeffrey A. Tucker, "Bush the Infallible," Mises Institute, Feb 14, 2003

In the State of the Union address, Bush said the following: "There is power — wonder-working power — in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people." His cadence in these lines come from the hymn by Lewis E. Jones, a revival hymn from 1899 once sung in the streets to whip up religious frenzy for prohibition (which Gary North calls the "'last hurrah' in politics for American fundamentalists").

"There is power, power, wonder working power," go the words, "In the precious blood of the Lamb." The sentiments are classically revivalist. All Bush did was replace Jesus as the source of the wonder-working power with the idealism and faith of the American people. He said this as if everyone should recognize the hymn and the meaning, though Europeans couldn't possibly, and few even in the West and East Coast of the US could have any idea what he was referencing. It was code designed to liven the hearts of the faithful — the tribe of evangelicals who constitute his strongest support base."

- Galatians 1:15-16 echoes the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5).

### Galatians 1:15-16

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

### Jeremiah 1:5

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

- Paul doesn't shy away from using language of revelation, also used by Jewish mystics (Gal. 1:16, 2:2)
- In Galatians 1:24-2:2, Paul makes allusions to Isaiah's prophecies of Jehovah turning from the Jews to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:1-6). In Acts 13:46-47 and Acts 26:15-18, Paul applies these "light to the Gentiles" scriptures to himself because this was what Christ told him on the Road to Damascus.

**Galatians 1:24-2:2**

And they glorified God in me.

Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

**Isaiah 49:1-6**

Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

**Acts 13:46-47**

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

**Acts 26:15-18**

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

- Paul's description of his journey into Arabia parallels both Moses and Elijah.  
*For Moses, Arabia had been the place of revelation, the place of law, where God's covenant had been solemnly ratified. For Elijah, Arabia had been the place where Elijah fled when faced with a death threat from Jezebel after he had killed the prophets of Baal. God meets Elijah supernaturally, and then sends him off to Damascus with a new commission. So was it in a way with Saul of Tarsus: he's presenting himself before God and getting new marching orders.*

From N.T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (2018)

**"So Saul went back to Damascus, apparently confirmed in his understanding of himself as a prophet** fulfilling the ancient role of announcing God's truth and God's anointed king to Israel and the nations. If he has not usually been seen this way, that may be because we have not paid sufficient attention to the scripture echoes he sets up in many places in his writings..." (65).

"Mt. Sinai was where God had come down in fire and had given Moses the Torah; it was the place of revelation, the place of law, the place where the covenant between God and Israel, established earlier with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was solemnly ratified. Sinai, the great mountain in Arabia, was, in that sense, the place of beginnings. It was the place to which subsequent generations looked back as the starting point of the long and checkered relationship, the often shaky marriage, between this strange, rescuing, demanding God and his willful, stiff-necked people. Sinai was where Elijah had gone when it all went horribly wrong. Sinai was where Saul of Tarsus went—for the same reason" (63).

“Paul, in other words, is not only making it clear in Galatians 1-2 that his ‘gospel was given to him directly, not acquired secondhand through the Jerusalem leaders. **He is also making it clear that his call and commissioning have placed him in the ancient prophetic tradition**, whether of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Elijah himself. His opponents are trying to go over his head in their appeal to Jerusalem, **but he is going over everybody else’s head by appealing to Jesus himself and to the scriptures as foreshadowing not only the gospel, but the prophetic ministry that he, Paul, has now received”** (66).

## Was Paul’s gospel adding to/taking from the Word God gave to Moses?

From both Orthodox Jews and ex-Pharisee Christians, Paul weathered blistering criticism for making changes to the Law of Moses. Consider: one of Paul’s major teachings was that Gentile believers did not need to be circumcised or keep the rituals of the Mosaic Law.

### Acts 21:20-21

<sup>20</sup>And when [the elders of Jerusalem] heard [Paul’s testimonies], they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

<sup>21</sup>And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

### Acts 26:21-23 (Paul clarifies that he teaches not the mere words of Moses, but the revelation of Moses, what Moses said would come)

<sup>21</sup>For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

<sup>22</sup>Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

<sup>23</sup>That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Paul’s Jewish and Judaizing critics could certainly point to scripture to support their position:

### Deuteronomy 4:2

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

### Revelation 22:18-19

<sup>18</sup>For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

<sup>19</sup>And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

In his epistles, Paul takes great pains to show how his message sprouts out of the ground of Old Testament prophecies and types and shadows. His message was well-rooted in what God had already revealed, though it took a revelation for Paul and his followers to see the ministry of grace in the Law and the Prophets. **God still works this way today!**

When more information is given about the original revelation, the extra information doesn’t constitute a new revelation. Compare the original revelation to a sculpture, as Bro. Branham does in the first chapter of the Church Age Book. More information about the original revelation doesn’t suddenly introduce a second sculpture; it’s just a further unveiling of the original sculpture. A prime example is the increasing level of clarity in the Old Testament about the redemptive promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.

### From the Church Age Book, p.89.

“It was the apostles who brought the original Word to the people. That original Word could not change, not even a dot or dash of it. Paul knew it was God Who had spoken to him so he said, “Even if I come and try to give a second revelation, try to make one little change in what I gave originally, let me be accursed.” You see, Paul knew that first revelation was correct. God can’t give a first revelation, then a second revelation. If He did, He would be changing His mind. He can give a revelation and then add to it, as He did in the Garden of Eden when He promised the Seed to the woman, and then later designated that Seed had to come through Abraham, and then later said it would come by the same blood lines in David. But it was the same revelation. It only gave the people more information to help them receive and understand it.”

THE.UNVEILING.OF.GOD\_ JEFF.IN V-9 N-1 SUNDAY\_ 64-0614M

295 The Word manifested, or revealed in that Revelation in there, then what does that puts me? If He is that Shekinah Glory, I'm part of It. Amen! Oh! Amen! That's right. The Word Itself revealed, reveals Itself.

Think! The mysteries of God made known to us in this day, by the same Heavenly Messenger that was made known to them in them days; notice, the same Pillar of Fire that sent Moses; the same Pillar of Fire that was on Moses that wrote the Bible; the same Pillar of Fire that Paul met on his road down to Damascus.

296 And Paul wrote the New Testament. **Remember, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they only wrote what they seen; but Paul had the Revelation. He pulled It out, for he had met the Pillar of Fire, himself.** And think, the same...

297 There, Joseph, all them wrote what went on, everyone wrote back in that day. But when Moses came on the scene, he had the Revelation. He had met the Pillar of Fire, and It was revealed to Moses how Genesis. He wrote the first four books of the Bible, Moses did. Is that right? For he met God in the form of the Pillar of Fire, veiled in the Pillar of Fire.

298 When Paul met Him on the road... **The disciples just wrote what they seen Him do, but [Paul] had the Revelation; went down into Egypt for three years and studied, and seen that God of the Old Testament was Jesus of the New, the Revelation!** "I was not disobedient to the Heavenly vision." That's right. Right!

299 And think of It! The same Pillar of Fire that come upon those man that wrote the Bible, is the same Pillar of Fire here, today, interpreting the Bible. Amen! How we thank Him for that! Same! What a comfort! What identification! I'm so glad to be identified in that, I don't know what to do! I'd rather be identified in That than all the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and all the rest of them. Identified in that Word where that Shekinah Glory and Revelation lays!

300 The Pillar of Fire appearing visibly among us, identifying that the Message is right, like He did at Mount Sinai. Remember, before the true message come forth, Moses preached and he led them out of Egypt; but there, before the real commandments was laid down (the Seals was brought in), God come down before the people and proved that Moses was sent from Him, (that right?) in a Pillar of Fire that Moses said he had seen in a bush and talked to him.

301 Oh, in this last days, to see that same Pillar of Fire right among us, speaking the same Word; not only that, but interpreting It by making It manifest, and proving It, It's the Truth.

So, the people has not one way to disbelieve, lest they just willfully want to. And, then, "He that sins willfully after having a knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

302 Notice, same Pillar of Fire sent to Moses and to Paul, that wrote the Bible, now sent to reveal It. The grace of God, the unchanging God, fulfilling the promises of Matthew 28, "Lo, I am with you always"; fulfilling Saint **John 14:12**, "The works that I do, you also"; fulfilling Saint **Luke 17:28-29**, "In the last days the Son of man will be revealed," see, see; **Malachi 4**, "Behold, I send to you Elijah the prophet, that will restore the Faith of the people back to the original Word." See? How this... See? Oh, my!

## The Ephesian church illustrates just how quickly revival fires can cool.

There didn't have to be a Smyranean, Pergamean etc. church age. But Ephesus didn't maintain their intimate walk with God, so they slipped away, which started the cycle of backsliding and revival in the church ages. Thus, in the church ages repeats this cycle of apostasy so familiar to us from the Old Testament. Example: see Judges 17-21, where we see "every man doing that which was right in his own eyes." We read of:

- an itinerant Levite selling his priestly services to the highest bidder (even to be priest to an idol). This Levite is later revealed to be Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses! (the KJV reads Manasseh = to forget), see Judges 18:30
- moral atrocities
- civil war, in which Phinehas (the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron) intercedes to God for eleven tribes of Israel, see Judges 20:28

### 77-1 EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3

The very name, Ephesus, has a strange compound meaning, "Aimed at", and "Relaxed". The high aspirations of this age that had begun with the fullness of the Spirit, "the depth of God", whereby they were aiming at the high calling of God, began to give way to a less watchful attitude. A less ardent following of Jesus Christ began to manifest itself as an omen that in the future ages the physical vehicle called the church would sink to the awfulness of the "depth of Satan". It had become relaxed and was drifting. Already the age was backsliding. It had left its first love. The tiny seed planted in that Ephesian Age would one day grow in the spirit of error until all foul birds of the air would roost in its branches. So inoffensive to human reasoning would that little plant appear to that New Eve (the New Church) that again she would be deceived by Satan. The Ephesian Age had presented to her the opportunity for God's best, and for awhile she prevailed, and then relaxed, and in that unguarded moment Satan planted the seed of complete ruin.

To understand this you must realize that the Spirit is not speaking to the original saints of Ephesus alone. This message is to the entire age which lasted about 120 years. Its message, then, is to all the generations in that span. Now history keeps repeating itself. **In the generations of Israel we see revival in one generation, only to see the fires fading in the next. In the third generation, embers may be glowing slightly, but in the fourth there may be no vestige whatsoever of that original flame. Then God lights the fire again, and the same process is repeated. It is simply the manifestation of the truth that God has no grandchildren.** Salvation is not passed on by natural birth any more than is there any truth to apostolic succession. It isn't in the Word. You start out with truly born-again believers, and when the next generation comes along they are no longer just plain Christians, but they have taken a denominational name and are now Baptists, Methodists, etc. That is exactly what they are, too. They are not Christians. You have to be born of the will of God, not the will of man, to be saved. But these folks are all coming together now by the will of man. I don't say that some of them aren't right with God. Not for a minute do I say that, but the original fire has died down. They are not the same any more.