

OTS 90 - Charles Paisley (Part 2)

[00:00:00] **Rod Bergen:** What caused you to start asking questions about the message? And I know these things, certainly with me. It's not suddenly you woke up and say, Oh, the message is false. You've got a question, right? And you have a difficult time getting answers to the questions and you talk to people and they don't want you to question.

So what started your questioning?

[00:00:28] **Charles Paisley:** So that's a, that's a little bit of a tricky question. Um, because, you know, like, like I said, I sat through all these end of the world predictions, and I still believed the message. I would die for the message. Right. I would've died for the message on the other side of it.

I mean, the stuff that we did, I mean, it. It's, uh, so, you know, none of those things, like even when the world failed in, in 2005, it didn't even phase me broad. I kept going. Right? Like it didn't even, didn't hardly phase me. Right? Um, even the first thing that kind of phased me a little bit is when we lost all so much of our family in 2008.

Like, and, and that's where I really, that's the first time. Maybe I put something in my Shelf like, why, why did we blow everything up? Why couldn't we find an answer to this? Right. But, you know, I I, we did what we always did. The fan is in his hand, right? And this stuff was done by the will of God to run off the chaff.

Right? That's, that's how we always explained it. This is the will of God to get rid of the chaff. Here we still believe the truth. So we're, we're the, we're the elite or, or what have you, you know, we're the true bride of Christ. And so I, I was, uh, although lots of things happened over the years, nothing ever for many years never made me think there was actually anything wrong with the message itself.

I was always able to do mental gymnastics to, you know, justify the message and just thought, Well, we just have this minor thing here or there wrong and. But maybe let me give you the, the first story that maybe planted a, a, a problem that stuck with me for a little while. So there was a man who came to our church named, uh, I'll say his name's, Glen Funk.

He's passed away. He was a, a tabernacle deacon during the forties and fifties. Uh, Brother Branham had appointed him and he had. He had two sons. Uh, he had more children, but two sons in particular that had contracted polio while William Branham was still alive. And one of them, they were both badly injured and one was crippled. As a result, and many, many times growing up and and into my young adulthood, he would testify how William Branham had prayed for his boys, and personally assured him that before the end came, these boys were gonna be healed.

And you know, that that was a, that was one of the many William Branham promises that people in our church carried. Cuz keep in mind, Faith Assembly, uh, was, was populated by half the church were families had known Brother Branham to the very nearly the beginning of his ministry. Right. So, you know, most message churches have no witnesses of William Branham, Right.

But our church was majority witnesses of William Branham. Growing up and so this, this thing that his sons was gonna be healed was just a really, one of the great pro, you know, great promises that we we'd look to. And so time went by and Glen Funk, the deacon died and then his sons get older, and then one day the first real problem came.

So one of his sons. Uh, had divorced and remarried a younger woman. And, and I wanna say too, these people, they're still alive. The, these are wonderful people. I love these people so much. I mean, and I miss them. Yeah, I really miss them. You know, um, the people of faith assembly, a lot of 'em are really wonderful people.

But this, this, this man divorced, he remarried. The first Sunday he comes to church with his new wife. You know, he comes in on crutches, you know, the, the preacher calls him and his wife out from the platform in the middle of the service and he tells them, Leave church, never come back. You've, you know, cuz what you've done in this remarriage is such a great sense.

So they're, they're throwed out of the church, right? Which is not a, you know, things like that happen. But there, as I sit there that day, right, I am, my mind is, is, is exploding. This man was supposed to be healed. Brother Branham, you know, had promised this, you know, it was prophetic. And now we have just thrown him outta church, you know, to never come back.

Like, so how is the prophecy ever gonna be fulfilled? Right? And so that was one of the first things that kind of planted a seed with me and. So as time went

by and that man's still living, he, he still hasn't been healed. But you know, I, I pray God does heal him, but that it just, it never happened, right?

And so at that point, I really thought something was wrong. And then when you get, when I got to about 2016, I started to, I started to realize that time was gonna go on long enough that all the living witnesses of William Branham was going to be, was gonna be dead. Uh, and so I started a process of trying to collect as much message history, which I have behind me on these shelves as I could.

And through that, I, I interviewed most, all the living people that knew William Branham in the church. Uh, started collecting testimonies kind of privately personally. And through that I started again coming into. All of these different conflicting facts. Right? That's when a lot of the discrepancies really became clear to me.

Um, one, one really prominent, one that I I had come across that troubled me a whole lot was the healing of Georgia Carter. And are you, are you familiar with that? It was one of the early healings. Okay. Yeah, so she was healed in 1941 and at our church we had multiple witnesses who were there at the services when that happened.

Um, she was healed after the revival was over, but um, I'm sure. Anyone in the message will, will remember this story. So Brother Branham was, uh, you know, in Jeffersonville area and he has a vision. And in his vision, um, he hears a sheep crying out Milltown Milltown. And he says, I gotta go to Milltown and save a little lost sheep out there, which was George Carter.

He always said, I didn't know where Milltown was. I never even heard of it. So I had to go ask people, Where's Milltown? Where's Milltown? Well, Brother Branham had gone, been going to Milltown for years before that, and he already knew Georgia Carter and all them years before that. Right. And, and I knew the people who were there with them years before that.

And so when that happened, you know, when I looked at that, that was one of the first times I realized, wait a minute, you know, William, Branham. Even would make up stuff about these supernatural experiences. Right. So that, that, that planted a big worry in me. And this, this rod is before I've even found any of believe The sign Yeah.

Or any of that stuff. Right. And so, so I, you know, I had these questions in my mind, um, and, and then I learned, I think the first thing I learned was the

municipal. Vision was false. Right? That was a, that was a tough one, uh, to, to kind of get through. And I found out, the old timers all knew it was false here,

[00:07:51] **Rod Bergen:** but now, one of the things that people always say, Well, nobody, when William Branham was alive, nobody ever told him that he was wrong.

[00:08:02] **Charles Paisley:** So that's not true ,

[00:08:05] **Rod Bergen:** That's, they just didn't stand up on the platform and say it, But

[00:08:08] **Charles Paisley:** So that I know that's not true at all. Right? So like, uh, Graham Snelling was his assistant pastor in the fifties. This is a well known story here. Graham Snelling confronted him over the 1933 baptism story he told, because he had told a lot of facts about that that weren't true, and I, we knew multiple witnesses at the 33 baptism.

So Graham Snelling, his assistant pastor, confronted him in the mid fifties over the way he was telling the baptism story, and shortly after that, William Branham has visions that Graham Snelling's committing adultery, right? And Graham Snelling's throw out and ran out the Taber. Right. Like this is, that's the, so that's the stories of things that happened to the people who did confront,

[00:08:48] **Rod Bergen:** but there was truth to the fact that he was committing adultery?

[00:08:53] **Charles Paisley:** I don't know. Right. I, I don't know personally. Uh, all I know is that's the, you know, that that's what was handed down to me is a story. Was that after he confronted him, William, Branham then has this, uh, vision that he's having a, a committed adultery. Yeah. And. And so that he's definitely not the only one that's told William Branham things weren't right.

There's Ernest Sandler had confronted him at one point. I don't know if you're familiar with that story, but, Okay. Ernest Sandler's from Saskatchewan. Yeah. Um, and, uh, he, uh, So this is a, this is a wonderful story, . Um, so we believe, like I mentioned, we believe that William Branham told these stories on purpose, uh, and God let him do it to purposefully to deceive people.

And we, we kind of, we went back to Elijah and Elijah and John the Baptist, and Brother Jackson would pull out examples where they all said, That were, seemed to be untrue. And so he said, you know, we, they were untrue. They said

things that weren't true and mislead people well, it's only natural. We would expect Brother Branham to also exaggerate and say things that aren't true.

So, um, so Ernest Sandler's, one of the stories that, that fits into that. So Ernest Sandler, he was with William Branham. Um, They were driving down the road in an old pickup truck, and brother Branham's in the passenger seat. And Brother Branham says to Ernest Sandler, um, he says, God showed you something about me, Ernest.

And uh, Ernest Sandler says, Uh, I don't wanna talk about it. And Brother Branham says again. Now, Ernest, I want you to tell me what God. God said about me. And, uh, Ernest Sandler says, I don't want to tell you Brother Branham. And then finally Brother Branham says, I adjourn the, in the name of the Lord. Tell me what God has told you to tell about me.

And Ernest Sandler looks at him and says, Brother Branham, you make a lot of stuff up

now, and who did you hear this from? Ernest Sandler shared this with us personally, and uh, and uh, and then Brother Branham says, Well, Ernest, that's true. I have that problem. You pray for me, . But so we've had these stories, you know, we, it's always been known to us. Brother Branham was a bad, terrible exaggerator, and, but we believed he did it on purpose

[00:11:17] **Rod Bergen:** To create stumbling blocks for people so that they wouldn't believe, although, you know, the big question I have is, so when does exaggeration turn into a lie?

So you know, it, I think, you know, when you're out fishing, you know, the, uh, the amount of rope you give somebody is more . You know, if it's a fishing story or something. But you know, when it comes to the gospel, I. I don't think there, you can't put no exaggeration it at all. Uh, we, we, we, we don't, you know, we expect exaggeration in fishing stories, but when it comes to supernatural experiences and the gospel, um, there cannot be any exaggerations in that.

[00:11:57] **Charles Paisley:** It needs to be the truth. Right. And so a little 11 eevens the whole lump, right? Yeah. That's how I

[00:12:03] **Rod Bergen:** God doesn't need our help.

[00:12:04] **Charles Paisley:** No, it's good. Right. It's all the miracle's already exciting enough if it's a real miracle, right? The gospel's already exciting enough if, if it's presented the right way, there's no, you don't need to spice it up.

[00:12:16] **Rod Bergen:** So we were talking earlier about, and you mentioned cognitive dissonance and this is a concept that was postulated first as a theory by a professor of psychology by the name of Leon Festinger in a book called When Prophecy Fails. And if you haven't read the book, you should, I know you've read it, Charles.

Yeah, you've got it right there. Yeah. It's a very, very good book. I think written in 1956. I just finished reading a book entitled, "Mistakes were made, but not by me.". Authors are Tavis and Aronson and it deals with the whole issue of cognitive dissonance in a variety of spheres public spheres.

And for those that don't know, cognitive dissonance is a hardwired psychological mechanism in our brains that creates self-justification in us. And we all have it. It protects what we know certain, our self-esteem, our tribal affiliations, the groups that we put ourselves into, we're part of.

We're part of various groups. Like I was in the message for almost 40 years and I identified with the group of people that were message believers and in particular our flavor or Sub-sect within the greater message. We were followers, William Branham. That was who I was as part of my identity.

And cognitive dissonance is a state of tension that occurs when a person holds to what they refer to as cognitions, which is just two ideas, two attitudes, two beliefs to opinions that are inconsistent with each other. They disagree with each other and a good example of this is when a person tells themselves, So there's a, somebody, a smoker, and a smoker says Smoking is a dumb thing to do because it could kill me.

But they also smoke two packs a day, . So they've got this problem inside of their mind and it produces mental discomfort. That range is from minor. Pangs to deep anguish to, but it does, it's to the extent that people can't rest easy until they find a way to reduce that dissonance. So in the example of a smoker the most direct way for a smoker to reduce the dissonance is to stop smoking.

By quitting. But if they try to quit and fail now they've still stuck with this dissonance. So they have to convince themselves that smoking isn't really that bad. Maybe it's worth the risk because it helps the person relax, or it prevents them from gaining weight. Because after all, obesity is a health risk.

And so they'd rather smoke and be thin than not smoke and be overweight. And the brain has incredible ways of creating self delusion. And it's really true in the message, message preachers tell their congregation, there's nothing in the issues on Believe the Sign or anybody, any of the other websites that exist.

But when you talk to ev, the message preachers, they've actually never looked at the issue. And they've convinced themselves that all the things that we've raised are complete nonsense because it's not possible in their worldview that William Branham was a false prophet. So with dissonance I know each one of us has gone through it and it's really prevalent in the, for people still in the message cuz they believe the message, therefore they're special.

They're the only ones that God has chosen and everybody outside the message is Atomic fodder, and as a result they'll do the mental gymnastics, which you were talking about that it takes to preserve those beliefs. How did you get through your cognitive distance? What was it like for you? Was there a particular issue that triggered your realization that your beliefs were wrong.

[00:16:16] **Charles Paisley:** So I think it, it maybe multiple things coming together. So I, I mentioned, you know, how we had the 2005, the know the world didn't end well, It didn't stop there. So we, we had new dates and then new dates and new dates and new dates and. You know, uh, in 2015, the Shmita was supposed to be the sign of the end, right?

The end didn't come 2016. The Jubilee was supposed to be the sign of the end. The end didn't come. Um, you know, every, every year or two, they were coming up with a new sign. That was the sign of the end. Um, and at a certain point, uh, there was just too many too fast for me. So I, I start wondering, you know, I start not necess to question the message at that point, but to question the credibility of the ministers telling me this stuff.

Do you know, I, I started having the problem there first, but then as I had those questions in my mind, uh, that's when I. I stumbled onto the things that, that I, I could not, I couldn't explain away anymore. And for me, that's the stuff around 1963. So in, in our part of the message, and I, I don't know if it's this way in every part, but for my part for sure, 1963 is, and what happened that year is.

Pivotal, it's almost everything to us. We believe that when the Lord descended from heaven with the shout, you know, with the, the cloud coming down, we thought that was the fulfillment. You know that verse in Thessalonians, the Lord descended from heaven with the shout and the brother Branham, having that experience and coming back and preaching.

Seven seals. We believed he preached the first seal, the first six, but he didn't have number seven. And so we believe that was a new divine Revelation from God and that we believe that's Revelation, That knowledge is what then made us the special bride of Christ. We had this special thing that nobody else had, and it was all through this experience.

So when I, when I started to uncover, The facts around 1963, that threw me into a loop that I, I could not find the answer for. And it, it actually started. Rod, it's your fault. I'll blame you, .

I get blamed a lot.

I'll thank you too. I'll thank you Also, So I was the editor of the Contender magazine and our pastor did a, a series on, uh, on the seals and, and the mystery cloud.

And I, I think I probably have the copy of it back here on the Shelf. So I thought, well, I'll, I'll go out to believe the sign. Used to have some nice cloud pictures. Let me go get a cloud picture off their website for the magazine. Oh my goodness. Something happened to your website? Rod . I, I get on there, think, Oh my goodness.

Believe the signs been packed. You know, that was my, that was what I thought. So anyways, I, I quickly found the pictures and moved on. Right. Got them into the publication. But there's other things. There's a whole lot of stuff I, I have left out at this point, but at that point, um, I'm having some questions and, and, and the two questions I saw raised on your site, uh, They warranted further investigation for me, I guess I'll put it that way.

Um, and, and number one, the cloud was made, was manmade, was one of the things, right? And the other is William. Branham wasn't even there that day. And so as I, I looked into those two things, you know, I, I came away convinced that the cloud was made by a rocket. Supernatural, right? I mean, the evidence is overwhelming and conclusive.

And I even had some of the preachers who preach the cloud supernatural from the platform, confirmed to me. They knew it was made by a rocket too. I mean, it, it's incredible Rod, like when I would investigate these things, I. Like I, I went to one message preacher, and uh, you know, and I talked about the rocket.

I talked about the cloud. I talked about William, Branham not being there, and he just kind of looks at me. Uhhuh. Yep, Uhhuh. And uh, then I get to the end

and I say, well, Did William Branham just make all this stuff up then? And he goes, Yeah, that's pretty well how it is. And I'm flabbergasted, John. I'm flabbergasted, Rod.

I mean, uh, like what in the world? You're the one who told me it was true. I mean, , what do you do with that? Yeah. Yeah. And so, uh, And so I'm like, What in the world?

That's, that's not, that's like at that point, point interrupt. That's like my conversation with George Smith when I, I did all of this research on the municipal bridge vision, and this is going back, there wasn't anything, right, so I was on a websites and I was doing research and I, you know, encyclopedias.

Of, uh, you know, Louisville and Indiana and all this going in. I couldn't find anybody that had died on the bridge. And so finally I phoned up Perry Green. He couldn't confirm anything. I phoned up George Smith and now by this time my wife is. Really curious about what I'm digging up, right? Because we're talking about this with my kids every weekend cuz we've got all these questions and we're not getting any answers.

And my wife, I'm on the phone and this is, uh, pre cell phones. I had my, my old landline and I'm on the phone and my wife is like, she's listening in to what, To what George is saying. And I said, I can't find any evidence for the, for anybody, uh, for the 16 people dying on the bridge. And he says, No, nobody.

And I just like what . I know this and you haven't told anybody. It's

unbeliev. Wow. It's, Yeah, so I, I found out that Brother Jackson found out that the, uh, the cloud was fake and Brother Branham wasn't even there back in the early nineties, is what I ended up finding out. Brother Jackson had known it, you know, for, for years and years and years before he died, and he just quit talking about it more or less and, and kind of changed, found something else to, to justify things.

So that was, uh, so my mental gymnastic I did at that point was, They all know the cloud is fake and they still believe the message. So there must still be something valid for me to believe the message. And so this is not enough by itself to make me not believe the message that the cloud's fake, cuz they already know.

And so they still believe. And so that, that's what I did. I mean, I don't understand why William Branham made all this. Stuff up maybe, and I don't

wanna be CHF and, you know, let his, you know, misdeed blow me away, right? So that, that's honestly how I looked at it. And I'm gonna stay here. I've still got the Revelation of the seals.

These are divine Revelation from God. We're good. Um, you know, on, uh, the searching for Vindication site, there's an article, the title quoting William Branham says, And their friends is where my sorrow. And, uh, so here, here friends is where my sorrow started. Uh, and I, I still get emotional talking about this fraud.

I can barely, uh, it, it still breaks my heart that I found these things, you know? But a very good friend of mine who was at church, his. Father had passed away. And then his mother and I, I preached his mother's funeral. And after his, uh, mother passed away, he was going through his father's things and he said, Would you like to have any of my father's old books?

And he was a preacher. And this book, uh, the book of Revelation, Clarence Larkin, same edition as What's in William Braham's Library, uh, was among the books. And I, I took it out to. I like pictures. You know, the pictures in here. I thought I could use these to illustrate our,

[00:24:11] **Rod Bergen:** and he hand drew every one.

[00:24:13] **Charles Paisley:** Yeah.

Yeah. So I thought they were really good and so I, I pull it out and, and start looking through it. And you know about the time you get to page five. Oh my goodness. Yes. Yeah. Oh my. And, you know, and, and I'm reading this book, and I'm reading all of these things that William Branham said, An angel told him, but here they are in, in a book.

And so I'm, you know, that that's where my sorrow started. And so, As I read through there, a lot of it I could dismiss, but basically two of the seals in this book are identical to what we believed, right? And so at that point, I, I started to have a serious deep sorrow that I was gonna find the other four seals one day, and basically discovering that, that the Revelation of the.

Was not divine Revelation to William Branham from an angel, but rather was something he copied out of books. Um, that's, that's the thing that finally pushed me over the edge and I didn't fully figure that out until I'd actually left the church. And, uh, very sorrowful, very sad, very painful to come to grips with, um, with that.

[00:25:34] **Rod Bergen:** Yeah, I know a lot of people. In the message, particularly preachers, constantly say, "The reason you left the message is you couldn't live it. The reason you left the message is you just want to go out and party and have a good time." That has nothing to do with it. It's just like, I couldn't believe I was finding these things.

It's no, like I actually, I tried to prove the message to be. and I failed. And I'm a researcher. That's my background. And I had, when I did research, I had to know beyond a shadow, doubt was true because when I gave someone my opinion they would go out and spend literal. Hundreds of millions of dollars based on, cuz I was in professional practice, I was in the tax game as a, worked for one of the largest accounting firms in the world.

And when I gave an opinion, I could get sued for that opinion if I wasn't correct. And we had people. Hundreds of millions of dollars through all these countries. And it's just like you had to know. You're right. So when I started finding out these things, I didn't, honestly, I didn't tell anybody except my family to say, Okay, look, here's what I'm finding.

I. Prove me wrong. Prove me wrong. I can't believe that I'm finding this.

[00:26:54] **Charles Paisley:** Yeah. For, for me, the, one of the only people I told a lot of the stuff I found to was the man who gave me this book. Um, he and I, I don't know if he'll listen to this or ever see this cuz he's still in the message, but if, if he ever does, I want you to know, I am so thankful you gave me this book.

Set me free in ways you don't know. And maybe he wonders why I told him the stuff I found. It's cuz he's the one who gave me the book . And I felt confident to confide in him some of those things. But yeah, it, it's like you say, Rod, I did not leave the message cuz I couldn't live it. And here's the truth, I was, I mean, I was a message preacher as far as the rules, I don't know, there's very few people I know who live the message rules better than I did.

And. . I don't think there's a thing. You know, Paul said I was Pharisee, the Pharisees, you know, of the tribe of Benjamin Circumcised the third day. You know, I was born on the bench. Yeah, yeah. I was there. Every service, you know, you could name it all, every rule. I, I never owned a pair of shorts. You know, You could just go down every rule and.

I lived it perfectly. And here's the thing is I, I still pretty well live the same way. You know, I've lived this way this long and I don't, uh, I don't know. I'm not

super, I'm set in my ways, I guess in a personal sense. So I'm probably never gonna personally change, you know? Um, but, uh, it, I still, I live the message better than a whole lot of the people that live on the inside.

Their sets of rules would go, so that's not at all why we left. I left because I found out that William Branham had deceived us about the most important part of the message. As far as we believed it, he did not have a supernatural experience. In 1963, the Lord did not descend from heaven with a shout.

That cloud was a rocket explosion. He wasn't even there. Right. And then, and then the Revelation that supposedly came from Angels, he got, he got out of not only this book, but another book as well. And he just kind of mixed and matched until he got what he presented to us. Yeah.

[00:29:03] **Rod Bergen:** Yeah. I know. It's very sad. So currently and we'll get to sum up more of these specifics, but you're part of the leadership of a church that just started up in Clarksville, Indiana called the Gospel Church.

What was your motivation for starting up a new church?