

Branch Davidians

RELS 225: Cults and New Religious Movements

Branch Davidian Beliefs

- Seventh-Day Adventist splinter sect led by “David Koresh” (Vernon Howell).
 - Davidians are a subsect of the Seventh-Day Adventists
 - The Branch are a subsect of the Davidians
 - Therefore are called Branch Davidians.
- Apocalyptic sect



Seventh Day Adventist beliefs

- 1) Saturday is the Sabbath
- 2) Jesus Christ will return to earth soon
- 3) The soul is not immortality of the soul
- 4) Resurrection of the just the unjust (later)
- 5) sanctuary in heaven in which Christ ministers
- 6) investigative judgment in heavenly sanctuary began on October 22, 1844
- 7) mark of the beast will enforce Sunday laws
- 8) body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (vegetarianism)
- 9) the Spirit of Prophecy of Ellen G. White (-1915)



Davidian additional doctrines

- 1) the gift of prophecy continues (Victor T. Houteff)
- 2) Purification of the church by the removal of the "tares"
- 3) Christ will establish his kingdom in the promised land on Mt. Zion.
- 4) Total abstinence from all flesh foods
- 5) Biblical feast days and practices of the early church will be kept



The Branch distinctive doctrines

- 1) judgment of the living began in 1955.
- 2) Worship (Lord's Supper) at the 3rd and 9th hours of the natural day
- 3) family is the image of the God (feminine = Holy Spirit)
- 4) Biblical feast days should be kept now already.
- 5) "Branch" is Jesus' new name.

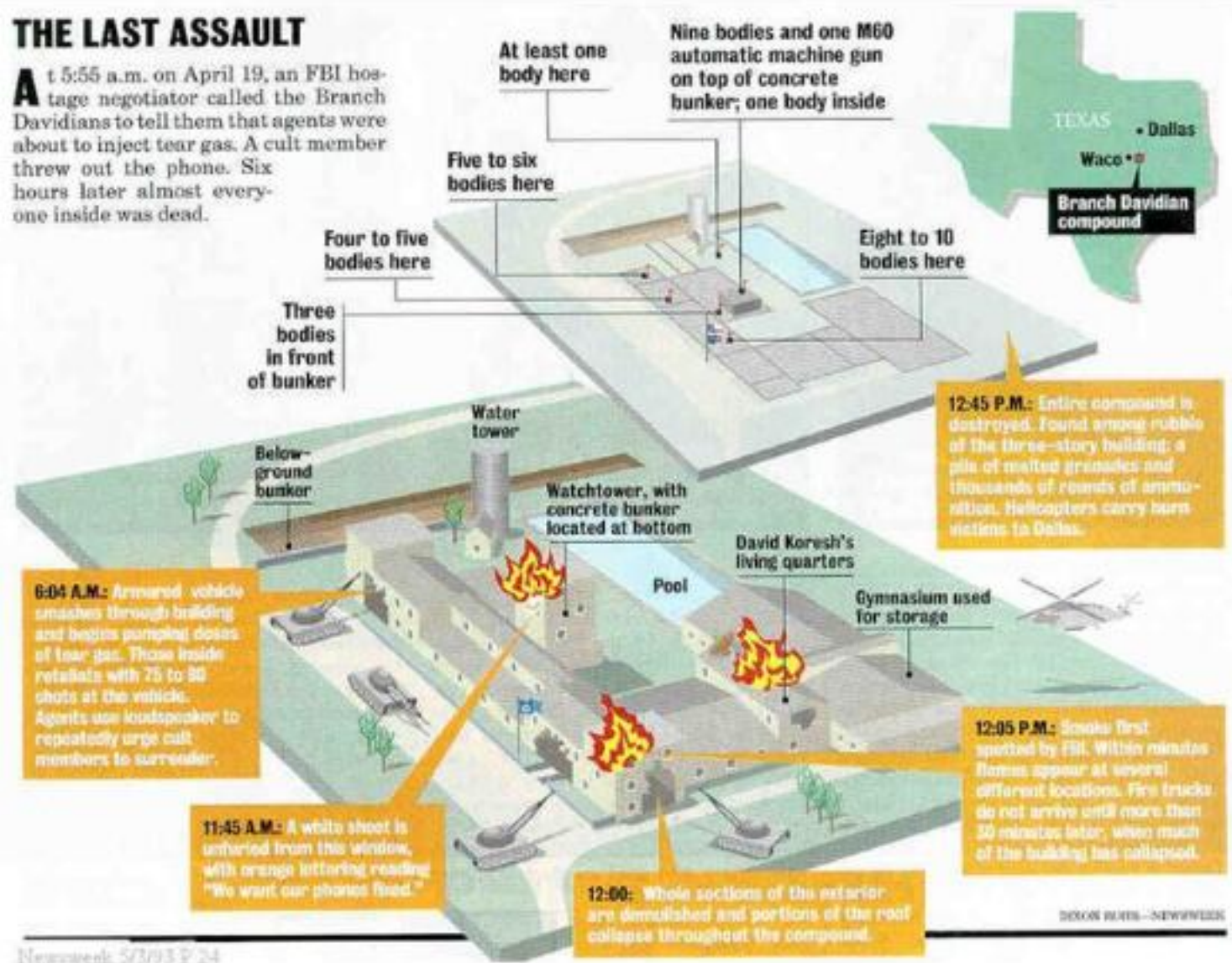
Sunday, 28 February, 1993

The End of the Branch Davidians

•80 armed agents of the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) shootout with Branch Davidians

THE LAST ASSAULT

At 5:55 a.m. on April 19, an FBI hostage negotiator called the Branch Davidians to tell them that agents were about to inject tear gas. A cult member threw out the phone. Six hours later almost everyone inside was dead.



Apocalyptic Militancy

- Anti-state populism of a right-wing Christian survivalist movement
- Fits in the history of militancy & martyrdom, to before the days of St. Augustine.
- Koresh was not predestinarian; he looked for signs; open to dialogue
 - No specific apocalyptic scenario in mind.



Opponents

- Marc Breault joined BD in 1986.
 - Left because of Koresh's sexual activities with teenage girls.
- Feared more Koresh atrocities (child sacrifice?)
- *A Current Affair* portrayed BD as dangerous cult
- Breault feared "another Jonestown"
 - And that Koresh would take hostages.



Law Enforcement

- **BATF investigations May 1992, after UPS worker discovered inert grenades**
 - Agent Davy Aguilera assigned to investigate.
- **Search warrant denied. Lack of probable cause.**
- **Aguilera then sought out ex-members, the Andrades.**
- **Following up on sexual allegations, BATF contacted CPS caseworker Joyce Sparks.**
 - Unable to confirm abuse.
 - (Incorrectly) told BATF Koresh rarely leaves compound.
- **BATF did not take opponents' bias into account; took reports at face value.**
 - Got a search warrant on the basis of opponents' information



Three possible scenarios

1. Serve warrant peacefully; siege if resisted
 - Fears siege would lead to mass suicide
2. “Dynamic entry” (storm compound)
3. Lure Koresh away, then execute the search warrant.
 - Didn't believe Koresh would leave the compound.

The raid

- Dynamic entry planned.
- Planned; one hour before, BATF realize Koresh was tipped off.
- No fallback strategy.
- Lost surprise, yet raid not called off. Why?
 - Calling off would mean a seige.
- Feb 28 raid a monumental failure.
- “We had information that babies were being beaten”: Reno.



Fire

- Would not have happened without the raid.
- Raid would not have happened without opponent's activism
- Authorities jealous of their domains (legal violence)



Commonalities with Jonestown

- Cultural opponents
- Focussed mass media attention
- Mobilized state power

Differences to Jonestown

- Not highly organized death
- Not immediate suicide

Waco: Rules of Engagement

1. How biased or balanced is this documentary?
2. Did David Koresh have a specific apocalyptic scenario in mind?
3. What kinds of external opponents did the Branch Davidians have?
4. What triggered the investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms?
5. What was the role of ex-members in the investigation?
6. What possible scenarios were considered, for serving the search warrant?
7. How did the BATF change their plan when they realized they had lost the element of surprise?
8. What is the connection between the raid and the fire? Would the fire have happened if the raid had not taken place?
9. What is the connection between the ex-members and the raid? Would the raid have happened if the opponents had not been active?
10. What did the Waco incident have in common with the Jonestown incident?
11. In what ways were the Waco incident and the Jonestown incident significantly different?

RELS 225: Cults and New Religious Movements

 slideplayer.com/slide/17713755

Presentation on theme: "RELS 225: Cults and New Religious Movements"— Presentation transcript:

1 RELS 225: Cults and New Religious Movements

Branch Davidians RELS 225: Cults and New Religious Movements

2 Branch Davidian Beliefs

Seventh-Day Adventist splinter sect led by “David Koresh” (Vernon Howell). Davidians are a subset of the Seventh-Day Adventists The Branch are a subset of the Davidians Therefore are called Branch Davidians. Apocalyptic sect

- 1) Saturday is the 7th day of the week, and, thus, the Sabbath of the Bible. That it is both a memorial of creation and a sign of sanctification, a sign of the believer's rest from his own works of sin, and his entrance into the rest of soul which Jesus promises to those who come to Him.[13].
- 2) Jesus Christ is to soon personally return to earth to gather together his elect and take them to heaven for 1000 years, after which he will return with them to this earth to dwell with them for eternity in his kingdom[14].
- 3) The non-immortality of the soul. That is, the dead have no consciousness, nor being [15].
- 4) There shall be a resurrection of both the just and of the unjust. The resurrection of the just will take place at the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the unjust will take place a 1000 years later, at the close of the millennium.[16]
- 5) There is a sanctuary in heaven in which Christ is ministering on behalf of mankind [17].
- 6) There an investigative judgment going on in the heavenly sanctuary that began on October 22, 1844[18] to determine who will come forth in each of the resurrections, and who will be translated without seeing death at the second coming of Christ[19]. That said judgment began with the records of those who had died, and would eventually pass to the living.
- 7) That the "mark of the beast"(Rev. 13:16-18) will be a universal decree enforcing the commandments and doctrines of men in opposition to those of the Bible, being primarily Sunday laws (Blue laws).
- 8) The believer should recognize his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and thus the believer will be led to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, tobacco, and all other narcotics, and from unclean meats – vegetarianism being the optimal dietary practice.
- 9) One of identifying feature of the true church is the presence of the Spirit of Prophecy[20]. Though the SDAs believe that said gift was manifested in special way through Ellen G. White, they haven't acknowledged any one as having the gift since she died in 1915. The doctrines that distinguish the Davidian[21] and Branch reform movements from the mainline SDAs are:

- 1) The Davidian and The Branch messages both teach that the gift of prophecy is so important in the church that the president of the association must be endowed with it. Though the Davidians recognize that Victor T. Houteff possessed said gift, they teach that no one will come with that gift until again until the "special resurrection"[22] at which time both Ellen White and he will take up their work again. Yet that belief is contrary to

Houteff's own teaching on the matter[23]. Those Davidians who believed that the gift of prophecy was given to Ben Roden after Houteff's death became part of the Branch. 2) The church will be purified by the removal of the "tares"[24], fitting her for the final work of evangelism. 3) After the purification of the church, the saints will return to the promised land where Christ will establish his kingdom[25] wherein the 144,000[26], those who follow the Lamb "withersoever He goeth"[27], shall stand with Him on Mt. Zion[28], and bring in "a great multitude, which no man could number"[29], and there "receive the forces of the Gentiles."[30]. The kingdom there will exist for a short period of time as a final witness to the world before Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to take the great multitude of living and resurrected saints with him for 1000 years, during which time the saints will determine the degree of punishment due the unrepentant[31]. 4) Total abstinence from all flesh foods, in preparation for the return to the Edenic state of the kingdom [32]. 5) All of the Biblical feast days and practices the early church kept[33], and which were taken away from her in the centuries following the death of the apostles through the influence of pagan thinking supplanting the simplicity of the Gospel will be restored to the church, include the true keeping of the Lord's Supper. The Branch teaches that the time has come for the restoration of those feasts, the Davidians don't. The doctrines that distinguish the Branch from the mainline SDAs and Davidians are: 1) The judgment of the living began in the heavenly sanctuary in) Daily worship should be kept at the 3rd and 9th hours of the natural day, in harmony with Christ's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary. This includes partaking in the Lord's Supper. 3) The family is the literal image and likeness of the Godhead. The feminine aspects thereof being understood to be the Holy Spirit and Holy Ghost.

3. Seventh Day Adventist beliefs

Saturday is the Sabbath 2) Jesus Christ will return to earth soon 3) The soul is not immortality of the soul 4) Resurrection of the just the unjust (later) 5) sanctuary in heaven in which Christ ministers 6) investigative judgment in heavenly sanctuary began on October 22, 1844 7) mark of the beast will enforce Sunday laws 8) body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (vegetarianism) 9) the Spirit of Prophecy of Ellen G. White (-1915) 1) Saturday is the 7th day of the week, and, thus, the Sabbath of the Bible. That it is both a memorial of creation and a sign of sanctification, a sign of the believer's rest from his own works of sin, and his entrance into the rest of soul which Jesus promises to those who come to Him.[13]. 2) Jesus Christ is to soon personally return to earth to gather together his elect and take them to heaven for 1000 years, after which he will return with them to this earth to dwell with them for eternity in his kingdom[14]. 3) The non-immortality of the soul. That is, the dead have no consciousness, nor being [15]. 4) There shall be a resurrection of both the just and of the unjust. The resurrection of the just will take place at the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the unjust will take place a 1000 years later, at the close of the millennium. [16] 5) There is a sanctuary in heaven in which Christ is ministering on behalf of mankind [17]. 6) There an investigative judgment going on in the heavenly sanctuary that began on October 22, 1844[18] to determine who will come forth in each of the resurrections, and who will be translated without seeing death at the second coming of Christ[19]. That said judgment began with the records of those who had died, and would eventually pass to the

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