



Lesson III

The Azusa Street Revival

Lesson Objective

To introduce a more detailed teaching on the Azusa Street Revival.

Los Angeles, California was a popular destination at the turn of the twentieth century for many Americans dreaming of greater opportunities and purpose. By 1906 A.D. this city was quickly becoming a major hub of activity. In April of that year two events focused the world's attention on Los Angeles: The city was impacted by an earthquake that devastated San Francisco, and services were conducted in a small holiness mission on Azusa Street birthing spiritual renewal globally.¹

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of Azusa Street

Sidney Ahlstrom, noted church historian from Yale University claimed on Azusa Street's 100th anniversary that William Seymour, along with Charles Parham, could well be the 'co-founders' of world Pentecostalism. What began as a prayer meeting on April 9, 1906 A.D. of 15 African-American people in the home of Richard Asberry on Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles, resulted in a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit. Several people were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Many people came to find more of the Lord to where the weight of them brought the porch crashing to the ground. Within three days they had to find larger quarters to accommodate the heavy traffic of hungry people wanting more of the Lord. A revival had begun. The new location, now called the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission, was at 312 Azusa Street in downtown Los Angeles, known as the area of Little Tokyo. This area was primarily an ethnic Japanese American community of Los Angeles. Seymour negotiated rented for \$8 a month, and purchased the property for \$15,000 one year later.



Three days later, on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1906 services were held. Thus began a series of several meetings a day, plus evening revival meetings that went into the wee hours of the morning.

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Referred to as a tumble-down shack, the building had once been a Methodist Episcopal church, but in more recent days, it was used as a livery stable and tenement housing. Seating for the congregation was nothing more than a few long planks set on nail kegs and a ragtag collection of old chairs. The pulpit was made from two wooden boxes piled on top of the other.

¹ <http://www.azusastreet100.net/history.htm>

The people worshiped on the ground level — a dirt floor, on which straw and sawdust were scattered. Between 300 and 350 people could get into the 40 by 60-foot wood frame structure, while, when crowded, many were forced to stand outside. The crude building lacked insulation or air conditioning. Perspiring bodies created odor to where one writer wrote, “it was necessary to stick one’s nose under the benches to get a breath of air.”² Seymour’s congregation consisted of Afro-American Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Asians and other ethnic groups of people who worshipped together under the same roof. It was most definitely a move of God.

One of the true signs of revival is that racial barriers are broken down

Upstairs was the “tarrying room.” Usually one hundred or more of multi-cultural, multi-racial people prayerfully waited there for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. Dozens of canes, braces, crutches and blackened smoking pipes leaned against the barn-like walls. The upstairs was also the home of William Seymour.

Immediately, the services caught the attention of the press because of their unusual behavior. A reporter from the Los Angeles Daily Times had visited their meeting, and the following day, April 18, the day of the San Francisco earthquake, the first article appeared in the Los Angeles press introducing Azusa Street to the world.³ Was that a coincidence? The result was people from all across the nation came to see the remains of the earthquake and the Azusa Street Mission and Revival.



http://www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199904/026_azusa.cfm

²http://www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199904/026_azusa.cfm
⁵ http://www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199904/026_azusa.cfm

A sign greeted visitors with vivid green letters. It read “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin” (Daniel 5:25, kjv), meaning God has numbered His kingdom and finished it. The writing had the Ns written backwards and its Ss upside down. Near the outside door hung a mailbox into which tithes and offerings were placed since they did not take offerings at the Mission.

The secular press in Los Angeles claimed that services soared to between 500 and 700 attendees within 3 months of its founding. Most of those who came from outside Los Angeles were white. Many of them were baptized in the Spirit at Azusa Street and left for other places around the world, where they carried their own Apostolic Faith message. In any given service 30 percent of those in attendance were evangelists, pastors, teachers, and missionaries. The number of people who attended the Mission during the years 1906–09 ran into the thousands. The number of regular attenders numbers around 200 a week. They formed the stable congregation.

The Apostolic Faith Newsletter

In an effort to get the message out regarding revival, Seymour had a monthly newsletter sent to those who showed interest in the revival. His circulation grew to 50,000 who received monthly information on the revival.

The Revival

Worship at the Apostolic Mission was daily, spontaneous, and ecstatic, drawing people from around the world to a revival that lasted about three years. The revival was multi-racial, welcomed poor people, and encouraged the leadership of women, which was very controversial at that time.



A day often began as early as 9:00 am and ran continuously until after midnight. Nobody knew what to expect in a service, because the Holy Ghost was there. Prayer and speaking in tongues were the central attraction. Along with healing, the walls were soon covered with the crutches and canes of those who were miraculously healed. At times people could be seen rolling on the floor or acting as if they were drunk.

The Message

Seymour preached to lift up Jesus. The doctrine of Seymour was five-fold in nature. (1) Salvation, (2) Sanctification or holiness, (3) tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism, (4) divine healing, and (5) the “very soon” return of Christ.

Seymour preached “justification by faith,” a doctrine that Martin Luther promoted. He also preached Entire Sanctification, a doctrine of the Holiness Movement – but he preached that it came through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, not sanctification that Maria Woodworth-Etter preached. In that, the second and third blessing came simultaneously. Seymour also taught divine healing as in the atonement, and the personal pre-millennial rapture of the Church. His main doctrine, however, was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

Scripturally, the Bible states that sanctification is a “process” of work that the Holy Spirit does within a believer.

Seymour told his parishioners not to go out to others and speak in tongues, but talk of Jesus in tongues instead. Tongues were to be used as an evangelism tool to the lost. The people took this advice and went throughout Los Angeles and other cities preaching Jesus. Women armed themselves with Bibles and anointing oil and walked from house to house looking for people in need. The people also went into the slum areas playing guitars and singing sacred songs to attract others.

Spreading revival

Within 4 months of the Azusa Mission's founding, newly empowered evangelists left the mission and began spreading revival across the nation. Revivals were springing up in other parts of California, Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Minnesota, and Indiana. Within 8 months, missionaries were in Mexico, Liberia, Angola, and India, and Norway.⁴

Ministers from other churches in the area, however, preached to their parishioners to stay away from that mission on Azusa Street. There were some who even tried to get the police to shut it down. Their efforts were unsuccessful. The press described William Seymour as hideous, and uneducated, and certainly not upper class.

The Welsh Revival

"Expectancy of revival intensified in Los Angeles when believers there heard about the remarkable revival in Wales, where from September 1904 to June 1905, over 100,000 people were converted to Christ. For the evangelicals around the world who had been praying for the outpouring of the latter rain of the Spirit as promised by the Old Testament prophet Joel (2:23–29), the spectacular results in Wales suggested that the great end-times revival had begun. The world could now be evangelized in the power of the Spirit before the imminent return of Christ and the impending judgment on the wicked."⁵

Newspaper coverage

The Azusa Street revival was something new in Los Angeles, a city already noted for its ability to tolerate a wide variety of religious claims. But when it came to this revival, one cynic reflected in the Los Angeles Daily Times about the appearance of yet another "new religion" in Los Angeles. "The intention seems to be," he surmised, "to keep on inventing new religions until every man has his own. Then maybe we'll have peace."⁶

This promoted other newspapers and magazines to capitalize on the miracles of Azusa Street. News spread like wildfire.

⁴ http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199904/026_azusa_2.cfm

⁷ http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199904/026_azusa_2.cfm

Frank Bartleman

Around 1905 A.D., Frank Bartleman began to write articles for the holiness press. A preacher himself, he turned his writings into evangelism for the holiness/pentecostal movement. He built himself a reputation as an authoritarian describing the spiritual climate of the holiness movement.

He had more to do with the spreading of Pentecostalism than anyone else because of his writings. People kept coming to Azusa Street to see for themselves. Those who came to Azusa Street between 1906 and 1909 A.D. heard Christ's Word to love one another. They heard messages emphasizing repentance, salvation, worship, healing, deliverance from demonic possession, holy living and baptism in the Holy Spirit.



Thousands were drawn to 312 Azusa Street by the fire of Pentecost. People sought God as they had never done before. The Bible came alive to where thousands were convicted and came to Christ. Believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit and received power for service.

Manifestations of the Holy Ghost

Azusa Street	Book of Acts
Baptized in Holy Spirit with Speaking in tongues	Baptized in Holy Spirit with Speaking in tongues
Revival broke	Revival broke
Drew crowds of people	Drew crowds of people
Joy	Joy
Acting as if drunk	Acting as if drunk
Singing and hand clapping	Singing and hand clapping
Dancing	Dancing
Long meetings	Long meeting
Crying and sobbing	
Repentance	Repentance
Many salvations	Many salvations
Testimonies of God's power	Testimonies of God's power
Jesus is lifted up	Jesus is lifted up
Racial barriers broken down	Racial barriers broken down

Worship	Worship
Holy Living	Holy Living
Holy lives	Holy lives
Many Healings	Many Healings
Deliverance from demonic possession	Deliverance from demonic possession
Rolling on floor	
News of revival spread	News of revival spread
Desire to evangelize	Desire to evangelize
Persecution	Persecution
Changed lives	Changed lives

People came from across the country and the world to experience the move of the Holy Spirit at Seymour's mission on Azusa Street, taking what they learned, and bringing it back to their home church. Within months, the Pentecostal movement was spread across the world, with Seymour's written and oral teachings on speaking in tongues and divine healing as the basis for its doctrine.



Three years of revival

Like most revivals, the actual revival of Azusa Street lasted only 3 years. The results of those three years, however, have changed the lives of countless millions of people across the world and into almost every culture.

A variety of things occurred that brought about the end of the revival of Azusa Street. Many local people came to Seymour's mission for revival, but then went out and began their own congregations throughout the city. This caused many to "pick and choose" where they would attend. Things also changed for Seymour after he married Jenny Moore, a Quaker, on May 13, 1908.

His marriage was opposed by two women in his congregation, believing he shouldn't make a long-term commitment, because of the soon-coming Rapture. The women stole Seymour's newsletter mailing list, which completely cut off his lines of communication to 50,000 his worldwide following. The newsletter ended in June of 1908.

In addition, Seymour's leadership role in the Pentecostal movement came to an end after a doctrinal dispute with William Durham from Chicago, who came to Los Angeles to restart the revival using his Finished Work theory of sanctification. The only thing he managed to accomplish in Los Angeles, however, was to split the churches that were already present. When Seymour locked Durham out of the mission, Durham and his followers started their own church, which quickly grew into the Assemblies of God denomination.



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