

= Azusa Street Revival =

The Azusa Street Revival was a historic Pentecostal revival meeting that took place in Los Angeles , California and is the origin of the Pentecostal movement . It was led by William J. Seymour , an African American preacher . It began with a meeting on April 9 , 1906 , and continued until roughly 1915 . The revival was characterized by ecstatic spiritual experiences accompanied by miracles , dramatic worship services , speaking in tongues , and inter @-@ racial mingling . The participants were criticized by the secular media and Christian theologians for behaviors considered to be outrageous and unorthodox , especially at the time . Today , the revival is considered by historians to be the primary catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism in the 20th century .

= = Background = =

= = = Los Angeles = = =

In 1905 , William J. Seymour , the one @-@ eyed 34 @-@ year @-@ old son of former slaves , was a student of well @-@ known Pentecostal preacher Charles Parham and an interim pastor for a small holiness church in Houston , Texas . Neely Terry , an African American woman who attended a small holiness church pastored by Julia Hutchins in Los Angeles , made a trip to visit family in Houston late in 1905 . While in Houston , she visited Seymour 's church , where he preached receiving the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues , and though he had not experienced this personally , Terry was impressed with his character and message . Once home in California , Terry suggested that Seymour be invited to speak at the local church . Seymour received and accepted the invitation in February 1906 , and he received financial help and a blessing from Parham for his planned one @-@ month visit .

Seymour arrived in Los Angeles on February 22 , 1906 , and within two days was preaching at Julia Hutchins ' church at the corner of Ninth Street and Santa Fe Avenue . During his first sermon , he preached that speaking in tongues was the first biblical evidence of the inevitable infilling in the Holy Ghost . On the following Sunday , March 4 , he returned to the church and found that Hutchins had padlocked the door . Elders of the church rejected Seymour 's teaching , primarily because he had not yet experienced the blessing about which he was preaching . Condemnation of his message also came from the Holiness Church Association of Southern California with which the church had affiliation . However , not all members of Hutchins ' church rejected Seymour 's preaching . He was invited to stay in the home of congregation member Edward S. Lee , and he began to hold Bible studies and prayer meetings there .

= = = North Bonnie Brae Street = = =

Seymour and his small group of new followers soon relocated to the home of Richard and Ruth Asberry at 216 North Bonnie Brae Street . White families from local holiness churches began to attend as well . The group would get together regularly and pray to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit . On April 9 , 1906 , after five weeks of Seymour 's preaching and prayer , and three days into an intended 10 @-@ day fast , Edward S. Lee spoke in tongues for the first time . At the next meeting , Seymour shared Lee 's testimony and preached a sermon on Acts 2 : 4 and soon six others began to speak in tongues as well , including Jennie Moore , who would later become Seymour 's wife . A few days later , on April 12 , Seymour spoke in tongues for the first time after praying all night long .

News of the events at North Bonnie Brae St. quickly circulated among the African American , Latino and White residents of the city , and for several nights , various speakers would preach to the crowds of curious and interested onlookers from the front porch of the Asberry home . Members of the audience included people from a broad spectrum of income levels and religious backgrounds . Hutchins eventually spoke in tongues as her whole congregation began to attend the meetings .

Soon the crowds became very large and were full of people speaking in tongues , shouting , singing and moaning . Finally , the front porch collapsed , forcing the group to begin looking for a new meeting place . A resident of the neighborhood described the happenings at 216 North Bonnie Brae with the following words :

They shouted three days and three nights . It was Easter season . The people came from everywhere . By the next morning there was no way of getting near the house . As people came in they would fall under God 's power ; and the whole city was stirred . They shouted until the foundation of the house gave way , but no one was hurt .

= = Azusa Street = =

= = = Conditions = = =

The group from Bonnie Brae Street eventually discovered an available building at 312 Azusa Street in downtown Los Angeles , which had originally been constructed as an African Methodist Episcopal Church in what was then a poverty part of town . The rent was \$ 8 @. @ 00 per month . A newspaper referred to the downtown Los Angeles building as a " tumble down shack " . Since the church had moved out , the building had served as a wholesale house , a warehouse , a lumberyard , stockyards , a tombstone shop , and had most recently been used as a stable with rooms for rent upstairs . It was a small , rectangular , flat @-@ roofed building , approximately 60 feet (18 m) long and 40 feet (12 m) wide , totaling 2 @, @ 400 square feet (220 m²) , sided with weathered whitewashed clapboards . The only sign that it had once been a house of God was a single Gothic @-@ style window over the main entrance .

Discarded lumber and plaster littered the large , barn @-@ like room on the ground floor . Nonetheless , it was secured and cleaned in preparation for services . They held their first meeting on April 14 , 1906 . Church services were held on the first floor where the benches were placed in a rectangular pattern . Some of the benches were simply planks put on top of empty nail kegs . There was no elevated platform , as the ceiling was only eight feet high . Initially there was no pulpit . Frank Bartleman , an early participant in the revival , recalled that " Brother Seymour generally sat behind two empty shoe boxes , one on top of the other . He usually kept his head inside the top one during the meeting , in prayer . There was no pride there In that old building , with its low rafters and bare floors ... "

The second floor at the now @-@ named Apostolic Faith Mission housed an office and rooms for several residents including Seymour and his new wife , Jennie . It also had a large prayer room to handle the overflow from the altar services below . The prayer room was furnished with chairs and benches made from California Redwood planks , laid end to end on backless chairs .

By mid @-@ May 1906 , anywhere from 300 to 1 @, @ 500 people would attempt to fit into the building . Since horses had very recently been the residents of the building , flies constantly bothered the attendees . People from a diversity of backgrounds came together to worship : men , women , children , black , white , Hispanic , Asian , rich , poor , illiterate , and educated . People of all ages flocked to Los Angeles with both skepticism and a desire to participate . The intermingling of races and the group 's encouragement of women in leadership was remarkable , as 1906 was the height of the " Jim Crow " era of racial segregation , and fourteen years prior to women receiving suffrage in the United States .

= = = Services and worship = = =

Worship at 312 Azusa Street was frequent and spontaneous with services going almost around the clock . Among those attracted to the revival were not only members of the Holiness Movement , but also Baptists , Mennonites , Quakers , and Presbyterians . An observer at one of the services wrote these words :

No instruments of music are used . None are needed . No choir- the angels have been heard by

some in the spirit . No collections are taken . No bills have been posted to advertise the meetings . No church organization is back of it . All who are in touch with God realize as soon as they enter the meetings that the Holy Ghost is the leader .

The Los Angeles Times was not so kind in its description :

Meetings are held in a tumble @-@ down shack on Azusa Street , and the devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites , preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal . African Americans and a sprinkling of whites compose the congregation , and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers , who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve racking attitude of prayer and supplication . They claim to have the " gift of tongues " and be able to understand the babel .

The first edition of the Apostolic Faith publication claimed a common reaction to the revival from visitors :

Proud , well @-@ dressed preachers came to ' investigate ' . Soon their high looks were replaced with wonder , then conviction comes , and very often you will find them in a short time wallowing on the dirty floor , asking God to forgive them and make them as little children .

Among first @-@ hand accounts were reports of the blind having their sight restored , diseases cured instantly , and immigrants speaking in German , Yiddish , and Spanish all being spoken to in their native language by uneducated black members , who translated the languages into English by " supernatural ability " .

Singing was sporadic and in a cappella or occasionally in tongues . There were periods of extended silence . Attenders were occasionally slain in the Spirit . Visitors gave their testimony , and members read aloud testimonies that were sent to the mission by mail . There was prayer for the gift of tongues . There was prayer in tongues for the sick , for missionaries , and whatever requests were given by attenders or mailed in . There was spontaneous preaching and altar calls for salvation , sanctification and baptism of the Holy Spirit . Lawrence Catley , whose family attended the revival , said that in most services preaching consisted of Seymour opening a Bible and worshippers coming forward to preach or testify as they were led by the Holy Spirit . Many people would continually shout throughout the meetings . The members of the mission never took an offering , but there was a receptacle near the door for anyone that wanted to support the revival . The core membership of the Azusa Street Mission was never much more than 50 ? 60 individuals with hundreds and thousands of people visiting or staying temporarily over the years .

= = = Charles Parham = = =

By October 1906 , Charles Parham was invited to speak for a series of meetings at Azusa Street , but was quickly un @-@ invited . Several reasons can be given for Azusa Street 's disassociation from him . Firstly , Parham had personality conflicts with Seymour and wanted to be the chief authority figure of the movement that was taking place , but the presiding leaders of the Apostolic Faith Mission were slow to make any changes to their methods or leadership .

= = = Criticism = = =

In a skeptical front @-@ page story titled " Weird Babel of Tongues " , a Los Angeles Times reporter attempted to describe what would soon be known as the Azusa Street Revival . " Breathing strange utterances and mouthing a creed which it would seem no sane mortal could understand " , the story began , " the newest religious sect has started in Los Angeles " . Another local paper reporter in September 1906 described the happenings with the following words :

... disgraceful intermingling of the races ... they cry and make howling noises all day and into the night . They run , jump , shake all over , shout to the top of their voice , spin around in circles , fall out on the sawdust blanketed floor jerking , kicking and rolling all over it . Some of them pass out and do not move for hours as though they were dead . These people appear to be mad , mentally deranged or under a spell . They claim to be filled with the spirit . They have a one eyed , illiterate , Negro as their preacher who stays on his knees much of the time with his head hidden between the

wooden milk crates . He doesn 't talk very much but at times he can be heard shouting , ' Repent , ' and he 's supposed to be running the thing ... They repeatedly sing the same song , ' The Comforter Has Come.'

The attenders of the meetings were often described as " Holy Rollers " , " Holy Jumpers " , " Tangled Tonguers " and " Holy Ghosters " . Reports were published throughout the U.S. and the world of the strange happenings in Los Angeles .

Christians from many traditions were critical , saying the movement was hyper @-@ emotional , misused Scripture and lost focus on Christ by overemphasizing the Holy Spirit . Within a short time ministers were warning their congregations to stay away from the Azusa Street Mission . Some called the police and tried to get the building shut down .

= = = Apostolic Faith publication = = =

Also starting in September 1906 was the publication of the revival 's own newsletter , the Apostolic Faith . Issues were published occasionally up until May 1908 , mostly through the work of Seymour and a white woman named Clara Lum , a member of the Apostolic Faith Mission . The Apostolic Faith was distributed without charge , and thousands of laypersons and ministers received copies worldwide . Five thousand copies of the first edition were printed , and by 1907 the press run reached over 40 @, @ 000 .

The Apostolic Faith publication reported the happenings at the Azusa Street Mission to the world . Its first issue 's lead story was titled " Pentecost has Come " . It contained a letter from Charles Parham , an article on Pentecost from Acts , and a series of anecdotes of people 's experience within the revival . One edition in 1907 wrote , " One token of the Lord 's coming is that He is melting all races and nations together , and they are filled with the power and glory of God . He is baptizing by one spirit into one body and making up a people that will be ready to meet Him when He comes " . The Apostolic Faith brought increasing attention to the happenings at Azusa Street and the fledgling movement that was emerging from the revival .

= = Legacy = =

By 1913 , the revival at Azusa Street had lost momentum , and by 1915 most of the media attention and crowds had left . Seymour remained there with his wife , Jennie , for the rest of their lives as pastors of the small African American congregation , though he often made short trips to help establish other smaller revivals later in life . After Seymour died of a heart attack on September 28 , 1922 , Jennie led the church until 1931 , when the congregation lost the building .

= = = Sending of missionaries = = =

As The Apostolic Faith and many secular reports advertised the events of the Azusa Street Revival internationally , thousands of individuals visited the Mission in order to witness it firsthand . At the same time , thousands of people were leaving Azusa Street with the intentions of evangelizing abroad . Reverend K. E. M. Spooner visited the revival in 1909 and became one of the Pentecostal Holiness Church 's most effective missionaries in Africa , working among the Tswana people of Botswana . A. G. Garr and his wife were sent from Azusa Street as missionaries to Calcutta , India , where they managed to start a small revival . Speaking in tongues in India did not enable them to speak the native language , Bengali . The Garrs later traveled to China where they arrived in Hong Kong and began to spread Pentecostalism in mainland China . They did this by working through other Protestant churches and organizations that had already been established . Garr significantly contributed to early Pentecostalism through his later work in redefining the " biblical evidence " doctrine and changing the doctrine from a belief that speaking in tongues was explicitly for evangelism to a belief that speaking in tongues was a gift for " spiritual empowerment " .

Missionary Bernt Bernsten traveled all the way from North China to investigate the happenings after hearing that the biblical prophecy of Acts 2 : 4 was being fulfilled . Other visitors left the revival to

become missionaries in remote areas all over the world . So many missionaries went out from Azusa (some thirty @-@ eight left in October 1906) that within two years the movement had spread to over fifty nations , including Britain , Scandinavia , Germany , Holland , Egypt , Syria , Palestine , South Africa , Hong Kong , China , Ceylon and India . Christian leaders visited from all over the world .

= = = Birth of Pentecostal movement = = =

By the end of 1906 , most leaders from Azusa Street had spun off to form other congregations , such as the 51st Street Apostolic Faith Mission , the Spanish AFM , and the Italian Pentecostal Mission . These missions were largely composed of immigrant or ethnic groups . The Southeast United States was a particularly prolific area of growth for the movement , since Seymour 's approach gave a useful explanation for a charismatic spiritual climate that had already been taking root in those areas . Other new missions were based on preachers who had charisma and energy . Nearly all of these new churches were founded among immigrants and the poor .

Many existing Wesleyan @-@ holiness denominations adopted the Pentecostal message , such as the Church of God (Cleveland , Tennessee) , the Church of God in Christ , and the Pentecostal Holiness Church . The formation of new denominations also occurred , motivated by doctrinal differences between Wesleyan Pentecostals and their Finished Work counterparts , such as the Assemblies of God formed in 1914 and the Pentecostal Church of God formed in 1919 . An early doctrinal controversy led to a split between Trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals , the latter founded the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World in 1916 .

Today , there are more than 500 million Pentecostal and charismatic believers across the globe , and it is the fastest @-@ growing form of Christianity today . The Azusa Street Revival is commonly regarded as the beginning of the modern @-@ day Pentecostal Movement .