

How the Prophetic Model of Azusa Street Speaks to Us Today

This past month, many watched Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd brutally murdered on film. And that's just scratching the surface to the heartbreaking racism still prevalent in our day.

Sadly, we have not yet stepped into the fullness of what Harriet Tubman, William J. Seymour, Martin Luther King Jr. and so many others have laid down their lives for us to walk in. In our day, we desperately need to see more of God and understand His heart.

Learning about the life and legacy of African American William J. Seymour (pronounced "See more") can open our eyes to give us prophetic vision into rewriting our future narrative. The keys within his life and the movement he led can prophesy into what we are facing today to teach us how to unlock a greater destiny for ourselves and for those who will come after us.

Seymour, son of slaves and blind in one eye, humbly paved the way and was used by God to ignite a revival fire that has since spread around the globe, introducing millions of people to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. During a time of heavy racial segregation, Seymour, as the leader of what became known as the Azusa Street Revival (1906), created a place where everyone would be welcome regardless of their skin color or nationality.

At the Azusa Street Revival, the walls of race, gender and age were broken down. Eyewitness and historian Frank Bartleman observed that "the 'color line' was washed away in the Blood." This was in relation to racial divides being abolished by the Blood of Jesus at the Azusa Street Mission.

One of the greatest revival movements in history came when a handful of African Americans met together in a home with only one agenda—to encounter more of God. There were only about 15 people, including children, present at the prayer meeting at the home on Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles on April 9, 1906, when Seymour preached from Acts 2:1-4. As he spoke about Pentecost, Jennie Evans Moore, who was resting on a stool during the meeting, suddenly fell to the ground and began to speak in tongues. This was a huge breakthrough at that time and what they had all been praying for. She is known as one of the first women in Los Angeles to speak in tongues at the turn of the century.

She recalled that it felt like “a vessel broke” inside her, and “water surged” through her entire being. When this rush came to her lips, she spoke in six different languages that she had seen earlier in a vision that were each later interpreted in English. Following this release, Jennie, who had never played the piano before, walked over to the piano and played it under the anointing while singing in tongues. She recounted the story in the Azusa Mission’s newspaper called *The Apostolic Faith* (1907):

“For years before this wonderful experience came to us, we as a family, were seeking to know the fulnes [sic] of God, and He was filling us with His presence until we could hardly contain the power On April 9, 1906, I was praising the Lord from the depths of my heart at home, and when the evening came and we attended the meeting the power of God fell and I was baptized in the Holy Ghost and fire.”

A few days later, on April 12, 1906, Seymour himself received the Pentecostal Spirit baptism after waiting upon the Lord and praying with a white brother, not giving up until he “came through” and spoke in tongues at nearly 4 a.m.

Word that God was doing a new thing within this community rapidly spread. Crowds of both black and white people from

different churches in the area came to the house on Bonnie Brae Street to see and partake in what God was doing. The house swelled with people, so many that the front porch caved in. Thankfully, no one was injured, but they realized they had outgrown the house. Within a week, they moved to a vacant building at 312 Azusa Street.

People from all different nationalities and races joined in harmony to worship and to encounter God together. Seymour's early leadership team was also racially mixed and also included women. Regular participants of the Azusa Mission in the early years included people from various ethnicities and backgrounds including African Americans, European Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and more. That this level of unity in the Spirit came at a time when lynching was common and many years before Martin Luther King Jr. came onto the scene is truly remarkable.

Powerful signs, wonders, miracles and healings were also released in that atmosphere of unity.

Another outcome of encountering more of God together was radical love. Visitors would come to Azusa and experience deep love and humility present in the people. One person said, "From the first time I entered I was struck by the blessed spirit that prevailed in the meeting, such a feeling of unity and humility among the children of God." In 1908, the leadership at Azusa said, "The Pentecostal power, when you sum it all up, is just more of God's love." Seymour recognized that love is what heals, restores and demonstrates God's power in the world.

These Azusa Street revivalists paved the way for us in such a remarkable way. Now it's our turn build on their breakthroughs. How will we build on the momentum of William J. Seymour and those at Azusa Street, of Martin Luther King Jr. and of so many others who have gone before us? How will we take what they have done for us and go even further in our

day? What will happen in our day when we run toward Jesus with total abandonment and say yes to radical love?

God planned before time began that we would be alive for such a time as this. He entrusted us to steward this generation. Now is the time for “heroes to arise from the dust of obscure and despised circumstances” to take their rightful place in bringing hope and bringing Jesus into every broken heart.

Will you say yes to radical love today? {eoa}

Jennifer A. Miskov, Ph.D., is a revival historian, author, speaker and the founding director of the School of Revival and Writing in the Glory. She is ordained by Heidi Baker with Iris Global and received her Ph.D. in global Pentecostal and charismatic studies from the University of Birmingham, U.K. Learn more about her at .