

How Times Square Turned Into a Holy Temple Last Weekend

On Saturday, June 29, the Times Square area in New York City was turned into a holy temple.

As the sweet fragrance of worship intermingled with the gospel infused the streets, thousands of people were drawn to experience the movement of God. People would stop, listen, engage, receive free books and ask questions. Some stopped for five minutes, some for hours. People from all walks of life and belief systems were mesmerized by the presence of God that permeated the area.

Pastor Darnell Harper exclaimed: "It was like Pentecost with the many nations present. I had a number of people from other countries tell me that they were taking the material back to their country with them ... one sister led a Buddhist to Christ who wanted a Bible after he received salvation."

"We literally prayed with people from all over the world. I personally met and prayed with people from England, Ireland, Palestine, South Africa, Germany, Switzerland, France and Canada. Locally I prayed with people from Michigan, the Carolinas, Virginia and N.J.," asserted Sonya Cherici, one of the prayer counselors.

After more than eight months of planning, Saturate NY Metro's founder, David Beidel, discovered the Jesus Week finale coincided with the World Gay Pride events in New York City.

"Personally, given the polarizing political climate, I was preparing myself for a very unpleasant response from the LGBTQ community," stated Beidel.

The mayor's office and local police were equally concerned. Many prayers were prayed for the *shalom* of the Lord to

surround us for that very reason. Not only did Beidel and team face possible confrontation with the LGBTQ community, there was an impending storm system that threatened to shut down the event.

“It was awesome that the Jesus Week finale was unexpectedly held at the same time as the Pride events. I was able to share the love of Christ with people who were participating in that celebration. One man decorated in the rainbow colors was standing to the right of the stage, mesmerized by the performance. I walked up to him and explained that we were there to spread the love of Christ. I told him that he was deeply loved by the Lord and that nothing he could say or do could change that. He needed to hear that Jesus died for him. He needed to know that all he has to do is call upon the name of Jesus. His eyes said that he received everything that was spoken,” Sonya explained.

Despite the risks, the Saturate team prayerfully moved forward, knowing the Lord was in control.

Music drew the crowds. As we began our sound checks, there was a completely different spirit in the air than we expected. God was moving with power over the Square. We were brimming with excitement as our sound checks alone were drawing in crowds by the hundreds.

Then the event began, and thousands gathered round to listen, take photos and some even danced. Alma Rivera, Freddy Washington, Willana Mack and the Nyack College Choir brought heaven down! Tens of thousands experienced the lovingkindness and joy of our Lord. The power of God kept washing over the crowds.

Then disaster came swiftly. By five o'clock, we saw black clouds approaching. Again we prayed. The Eagles Wings band began to worship and filled the atmosphere with sweet joy and hope. Archbishop Steve Smith then beautifully shared the

gospel, and the crowds received the message warmly.

In the middle of our second musical act, as children from the Gifted and Talented School in the Bronx began to perform, it began to sprinkle a bit. Then within five minutes, the representative from the mayor's office told us to pull the plug. The event needed to end immediately. It was so abrupt that we were not even allowed to give an explanation from the stage.

Eight months of planning, hundreds of man hours and 35, in non-refundable expenses went into this event. It was unthinkable. Everyone began to pray for the Lord to rebuke the wind and the rain. We declared peace in Jesus' name and waited for God's answer.

In the meantime, the mayor's representative explained that less than a mile north of us, monsoon conditions and severe weather were so dangerous that they had to stop a huge event and evacuate everyone from Central Park.

"After living in NYC for nearly 50 years, it was the first time I have ever heard of Central Park being evacuated," exclaimed Beidel. Shortly after, they learned that another large event less than a mile directly west of Times Square was shut down because of severe weather.

Beidel and team were warned that the storm was heading their way, and it could get very dangerous. Then severe weather with blinding downpours hit downtown Manhattan and forced cancellations of events there as well. Times Square was surrounded by deluges and tornado-like winds. The mayor's office believed it was inevitable that the monsoon would descend upon the Saturate event. Friends who arrived late to the event spoke of the buckets of driving rain they commuted through, but in "Jesus' Square," the little sprinkles didn't even cause damage to the giveaway outreach materials.

Spectrum News Staff reported "Severe Weather Threats Forces

Evacuations of NYC Pride Events were evacuated” (Spectrum News, published 6:07 PM ET Jun. 29, 2019). However, blue skies, a sweet breeze and perfect temperatures surrounded Times Square.

While awaiting the green light from the mayor’s office, the Saturate team went into the streets to pray with people and hand out thousands of books and “Every Home for Christ” tracts. “I gave one of our outreach books to a man. Around 15 minutes later, he came back after reading several chapters in the book. God so moved in his heart that he prayed with weeping as he gave his life to Christ,” shared Pastor Harper. Finally, an hour later, the mayor’s representative convinced her office that the Times Square area was clear and called to give the go-ahead.

“One day in glory, I look forward to talking with the angels who held back the storm and smiled with our heavenly Father on the worshippers and prayer warriors who gathered to build a holy altar in the center of NYC and in the center of all kinds of storms ... children who believed that God rules in the midst of His enemies, and that God loves it when we dare Him greatly. He loves it when we bring the great news of His matchless love to those who feel like outcasts,” Beidel rejoiced.

As it turned out, God worked everything that happened that day for His good. All the outdoor events in New York City were cancelled except Jesus Week XL! All of New York was swamped and deluged, except Times Square! There was only one place to go if you were looking for something to do where the skies were clear in New York: Times Square!

There were already record numbers of New Yorkers, out-of-towners and internationals in New York because of Pride Month. Many were rerouted to Times Square as a result of the storm. Like a good Shepherd, God corralled all his precious ones into Times Square so they could hear and feel His passionate love

for them.

"I met a young man who asked if he could dance. He said 'I didn't know if it was OK since it's a Christian thing,'" recalled Sonya. "I began to explain that it is the finale of Jesus Week, and that we were there to spread the love of Christ. He said, 'I know about that because my father is a pastor.' We began talk about the return of Christ and preparing. I explained that God knew him before he was born. He had a plan and a purpose before he was given to his parents. After speaking for a while, we prayed. He repented and asked the Lord for forgiveness. As he walked away, he said, 'You may have just changed my life.'"

Tom Maharis, Dimas Salaberrios and David Beidel shared the good news in final two hours. As they preached the gospel three different times to three different crowds, there was a hush in Times Square, a quiet listening in the noisiest square mile in the nation. Each time the gospel was preached, an opportunity was given to all to open their hearts to Jesus. We are confident that in heaven, we will meet thousands who lifted up their hearts to Jesus on that beautiful day when God made Times Square into a temple for His name!

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