

Houston's Spiritual Mother: Despite Demons, Whitney Wanted Jesus

Whitney Houston's funeral will be held Saturday in the Newark, N.J., church where she first honed her golden voice and learned about God.

Those who knew her well say that Christian foundation never left her.

Houston was introduced to the music world in 1985—America's sweetheart with the voice of an angel.

She quickly rose to the top, selling more than 170 million records worldwide. She became the only artist with seven consecutive No.1 Billboard hits.

But with great fame came a great fall.

Slowly the world watched an image of grace, poise and beauty become tattered by a powerful addiction to drugs and alcohol.

A Woman of Faith

But according to Houston's spiritual mother, gospel music legend Shirley Caesar, there was another side of the songstress much of the world failed to see—a woman who loved and desired God in her life.

"We've lost an icon," Caesar said. "We've lost a precious jewel, from my own knowledge, to the body of Christ."

Houston looked up to Caesar, often calling her "Mama Shirley."

"I was honored, yet I wanted her life totally whole," Caesar told CBN News.

While many will remember Houston for her secular music, she

had several gospel hits.

In the 1996 movie *The Preacher's Wife*, she stood alongside Denzel Washington to tell a story of inspiration and redemption through God—singing songs like “I Love the Lord” and “He’s All Over Me.”

“This girl knew that Jesus loved her. She had such an anointing, if you will, in her voice,” Caesar recalled.

Years of drug and alcohol abuse greatly affected Houston. Her voice shaken and her soul struggling, many thought she was finished. But Caesar says despite Houston’s struggles, she sought deliverance.

“She was looking for somebody that had the power of God resting in their lives,” Caesar explained.

Houston’s Last Days

In her final days, friends claim Houston had a premonition about her death—that she “felt like her time was coming” and “really wanted to see Jesus.” Two days before her death, Houston sang “Jesus Loves Me” at a night club in Los Angeles. It would be her last song to the world.

Gospel artist Kim Burrell had planned to see Houston the night she died.

“She was in great spirits. She was singing. She had gospel music playing when she left the message. So it sounded like typical, happy Whitney ready to see me,” Burrell told CNN. “I just hate we didn’t get a chance to do that. I was on my way to her and I ended up going to the hotel, but it was just a little too late.”

Caesar says just a few months ago, Houston visited Burrell’s church and left filled with the Spirit of God.

“She went to the church and Kim said the power of God fell on Whitney Houston so till she ran all around the church,” Caesar

said.

"Then she fell out in the floor and just began to speak in tongues," an emotional Caesar added. "She just began to speak in tongues for about 30 minutes laying there praising the Lord."

While questions surround Houston's cause of death, many also question her Christian conviction.

Caesar believes the woman who affectionately called her "mama" was involved in a powerful spiritual battle.

In the end, it may seem that life in the fast lane overtook Houston, and that she never got the deliverance she so desired. But Caesar sees it differently.

"A lot of times it come in a slow process," Caesar explained. "That's what winning is all about. It's not to those who can run the fastest, just take your time and win. And Whitney Houston was a winner."