

The Spiritual Awakening of Buffalo, New York

Monday night, Jan. 2, 2023, God drew our nation to prayer as Bills player Damar Hamlin experienced cardiac arrest on live tv. Could this have been the largest spontaneous prayer meeting in the history of our nation—beginning with players on the field, spreading to 67,000 fans in the stands, then multiplying to more than 23,000,000 viewers around the country?

Monday night, Jan. 2nd, 2023

The New Year kicked off with the national spotlight on Buffalo—the Buffalo Bills vs. the Cincinnati Bengals. The late Bob Jones, a well-known prophet, came to Buffalo in the late 90's. He prophesied that revival would break out when a Buffalo sports team won the "Big One." Every sports season, we prayed—Would this be the year for the Super Bowl or Stanley Cup—the Big One?



In the first quarter, Bills Safety Damar Hamlin tackled Cincinnati's Tee Higgins. Hamlin bounced to his feet, took a few steps and suddenly collapsed to the ground.

As the medical crew worked frantically on the motionless player, millions witnessed nine minutes of CPR. Players wept or embraced or knelt in prayer. Bills coach Sean McDermott leaned into his faith, "I'm a Christian man to begin with, and I'm not afraid to say that." Sean called the players to huddle together and pray.

ESPN's Dan Orlovsky prayed for Hamlin. "(God we)...come to You, and pray ...for healing for Damar. I believe in prayer. We

believe in prayer. We lift up Damar Hamlin's name. In Your Name, Amen." No one praying knew whether Damar was alive or dead, but they kept praying.

Day 1, Tuesday, Jan. 3rd

News was scarce—Hamlin was in critical condition in an induced coma. Many of us were up during the night, checking phones and praying for Damar.

Day 2, Wednesday, Jan. 4th

News continues to be scarce—Hamlin is still in critical condition. Damar's own words from his college days strengthened my prayers: "My faith is in God. So whatever He has planned for me, that'll be it."

Day 3, Thursday, Jan. 5th

In Buffalo, our weekly Pastors prayer group was praying for Damar when:

10:53 am "Bills safety Damar Hamlin awake, communicating, doctors say."

Hamlin even wrote a note:

"Did we win??"

"...yes, Damar, you won the game of life..." (Dr. Pritts)

Day 5, Saturday, Jan. 7th

Damar's first public comment via Instagram: "The Love has been overwhelming, but I'm thankful for every single person that prayed for me and reached out... On a long road keep praying for me!"



Day 6, Sunday, Jan. 8th

The Bills regroup to play the New England Patriots. Damar posted “there’s nothing I want more than to be running out that tunnel with my brothers. God using me in a different way today.” The game began with a 96-yard touchdown on the opening kickoff. Damar’s doctors noted: “When the opening kickoff was run back, he (Damar) jumped up and down, got out of his chair pulling out every cord, set every alarm off in the ICU in the process, but he was fine.”

During the return, Bills quarterback Josh Allen reflected: “You want the truth? It was spiritual. It really was. Bone-chilling. I can’t remember a play that touched me like that, I don’t think in my life. ...I was going around to my teammates saying ‘God’s real.’”

Allen expanded with Kyle Brandt: “[there was] just kind of a spiritual awakening really for me, and I know for a lot of other people that maybe didn’t have the strongest belief, or wasn’t one of the biggest, strongest Christian followers. ...I’ll be the first to admit, I haven’t been the most devoted Christ-follower in my life, ...but something got hold of me there, and it was extremely powerful, [something] that I couldn’t deny.”

Daniel Darling summed up the week perfectly:

“So perhaps the reports of America’s religious decline are greatly exaggerated and, at least on one dark night in Buffalo, America started to pray again.”

In a prophetic word on May 28, 2021, Pastor Barbara Garlington prophesied resurrection starting in Buffalo and spreading to the nation:

“...there is going to be a release of the anointing to raise people from the dead. And He said that it was going to start in this house and it was going to spread throughout this city and to the rest of our country. ...this is going to be the beginning of the next revival that we are going to see take

place.” (King Jesus Conference, Full Gospel Tabernacle, Orchard Park, NY)

The eyes of the world are on Buffalo! We thought the Big One would be a Super Bowl win, but could the Big One have been Jan. 2nd? Is it possible that millions of prayers releasing a miracle were God’s Big One for Buffalo?

What does it mean for your city? Look for God in unexpected places at unexpected times doing unexpected things. Could the next move of the Spirit begin away from sacred space and sacred place? Are signs, wonders and miracles ahead?

Jentezen Franklin has the last word:

“Hamlin... takes a hard hit to the heart, drops down, stops breathing and he’s dead. ...the whole world, the whole stadium, professional football players with tears streaming down their face—humble themselves. It’s like God made an announcement to America: This is God and I interrupt regularly scheduled programing. Since I can’t get My church to take me seriously, I’m going to come in a coliseum. If you’ll pray, I’ll raise your dead sons and your dead daughters up. If you’ll pray, I’ll restore what the enemy has stolen—your hopes, your dreams. ...Are we going to play or are we going to pray?” (1-9-23, Gateway Church, Dallas). {eoa}

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