

Azusa's Centennial

Pentecostal and charismatics are returning to Los Angeles in 2006.

In April a once-in-a-lifetime event will take place in Los Angeles. If you haven't already made plans to attend, I urge you to participate.

It's been 100 years since the Holy Spirit was poured out in a former livery stable on Azusa Street. The result was the worldwide Pentecostal movement, which comprises more than 400 million people around the globe-including you and me.

Time magazine called the Azusa Street Revival one of the top 100 events of the past millennium. Not of the century-but of the millennium. That's amazing when you consider that it all started at a small, home prayer meeting on Bonnie Brae Street.

The revival, which was moved to the Azusa Street location to accommodate more people, continued night after night for three years. The Los Angeles Times wrote front-page articles criticizing the strange things that happened there. But the derision only fueled interest, and seekers came from around the world to receive a powerful impartation from the Holy Spirit.

Unlike the Welsh revival that was going on at the same time but later died out, the Azusa Street Revival continued, giving birth to all of today's Pentecostal denominations and morphing into the charismatic movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Today all charismatic movements, from the Word-Faith movement to Roman Catholic renewal, trace their roots back to Azusa Street.

Now Pentecostals and charismatics from around the world are returning to Los Angeles to celebrate what happened when William Seymour, the son of ex-slaves, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and became the unlikely father of a worldwide movement he probably never envisioned.

Ten years ago, I witnessed much of the planning and hoopla surrounding the centennial of the modern Olympic games in Atlanta and attended a number of events with some friends. It's something I'll always remember.

A few years later I attended the World Pentecostal conference in Seoul, Korea. One of the highlights was going to a rally in one of the Olympic stadiums that was packed with more than 100,000 people. I watched a great procession that had the dignity and excitement of an Olympic opening-day event. It was the Korean Christians' way of welcoming and impressing their guests from around the world.

I can only envision that the event on Saturday, April 29, in Los Angeles will be equally impressive.

What God has done through the Pentecostal movement is significant, yet we rarely take time to reflect on and celebrate it. We're so focused on "the next move of God" that we don't look back at our roots. Here's an opportunity to rejoice in what God has already accomplished and to feel a part of a very big family of believers.

The program is a virtual Who's Who of the Pentecostal world. A special insert in the January issue of Charisma gave a detailed description of the event. An ad in this issue provides the necessary contact information.

I believe it is worth the time and expense involved to attend. Never again will there be a centennial. And the array of speakers, the pageantry and the enormity of this event are things you don't want to miss.

To commemorate this event, we are publishing three books about it. The first is a highly readable biography of Seymour by British historian Craig Borlase appropriately titled William Seymour: A Biography. The second, Fire on the Earth, is a compilation of newsletters written at the time of the revival that contain eyewitness reports of what was taking place. The third is a coffee-table book by Eddie Hyatt, author, and Joel Kilpatrick, general editor, titled The Azusa Street Revival, which includes the history of the Pentecostal movement in pictures and words.

Check the schedule for the "marketplace ministry" sessions at the convention center during the week. I'm scheduled to be one of the speakers and would enjoy having you attend my session. And, by the way, when you attend, come by our Strang Communications booths at the various venues and say hello. I'd like to meet as many readers as I can.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.