

Adult Sunday School Class “Our Christian Heritage” - Lesson 12

Full Circle to Pentecost in the 20th Century

Our study of Christian History has taken us from the Spirit-filled, Jesus name, revival days of the apostles in the first century through the Dark Ages when institutional Christianity (the Catholic Church) hit a spiritual and doctrinal low. Then the Reformation brought key reformers such as Luther (the 1500's) and Wesley (the 1700's). The 1800's brought the Holiness Movement, and now as we enter the 20th century in our study, we see the Lord preparing a Spirit-filled, Jesus name church (like unto the first century church) for his glorious Second Coming.

The 20th century was an amazing century in many ways. It was a time of tremendous social change, technological advancements, and world wars. In the 20th century, the world was introduced to electricity, indoor plumbing, automobiles, Hollywood, air travel, women voting, the Great Depression, the United Nations, the new nation of Israel, the atomic bomb, television, satellites, space travel, computers, and cell phones. But in the spiritual realm, it was a time of restoring Christianity to New Testament apostolic truth and power. This restoration began with Luther at the beginning of the Reformation and would be completed in the 20th century.

The history of the Christian church in the 20th century is filled with tremendous stories of men seeking God for more of His Spirit and His truth, giving themselves totally to revival. Some of the greatest revivals of all time took place in the 20th century and crossed denominational lines. It is also the story of men breaking down under the strain, suffering persecution or attack in the ministry, or in some cases exalting self above God - to the ruination of their ministries. All this is a part of history, yet God marches the church forward in the 20th century.

The Restoration Progresses

Prior to the 20th century, classic Protestantism taught that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. When a person believes on Jesus Christ (or “accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior,” or repents and gives his life to Christ), he is “saved,” or “converted,” or “justified.” Classic Protestantism was also trinitarian, a teaching that was continued from the Catholic church. These two doctrines were the basis of Protestantism.

The Methodists in the 1700's, under John Wesley, added a “second work of grace” to this and said that a person must also seek to be “sanctified” because after a person is “justified,” he is still dominated by his sinful nature. To Wesley, this was the process of the Spirit in a person's life. In the 1800's, Methodists had mostly discarded “sanctification,” but in the last half of that century, the Holiness Movement began to teach the doctrine of sanctification again. However, many of them stated that sanctification is not a process, but *an experience* (a person could point to a time

and place where they were sanctified). Therefore, many in the Holiness movement would testify, “Thank God I’ve been saved and sanctified.”

During the the 1700’s and 1800’s, many revivalists would speak of the need for the church to be baptized with the Spirit or the need for the Spirit of God to revive the church. However, it was rare that anyone equated speaking in other tongues with the baptism of the Spirit. It was taken for granted that when a person was “converted,” he was automatically filled with the Spirit. Holiness people taught that a person was filled with the Spirit at “sanctification.”

Some in those centuries did receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in other tongues, but most considered tongues to be a “gift of the Spirit,” and not the initial evidence that a person was “filled with the Spirit.” It was not taught that speaking in tongues was the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This was to change in the 20th century.

The Dawn of the 20th Century Brings Holy Spirit Evidence

The first day of the 20th century marked the beginning of a new movement in Christianity that would sweep the world in the next hundred years. By the end of the 20th century, more people would identify with this Pentecostal movement than any other label in Christendom, except for the Roman Catholic Church.

Although this Pentecostal movement was a new historical development, spiritually it was not new at all, but it sought to restore the doctrine and experience of the apostles and the first-century church (namely, receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in other tongues, and living a Spirit-filled life). While in many ways it succeeded, at the same time the majority of the people who identify with the Pentecostal movement today have not fulfilled its original promise.

The story begins with Charles F. Parham, an independent Holiness preacher and founder of a small Bible school in Topeka, Kansas. The Bible school began in the fall of 1900. Parham studied the Scriptures to find evidence for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and he urged his students to do likewise. They concluded that the initial biblical evidence is speaking in tongues, and they began to seek this experience.

In a prayer meeting on January 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman, a student at the school, asked Parham to lay hands on her that she might receive the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Here is her testimony:

. . . the Holy Spirit fell upon me and I began to speak in tongues, glorifying God. I talked several languages, and it was clearly manifest when a new dialect was spoken. I had the added joy and glory my heart longed for, and a depth of the presence of the Lord within that I had never known before. It was as if rivers of living water were proceeding from my innermost being.

Not long after, Parham and thirty-four other students also began speaking in unknown languages. It is said that Ozman could not speak English for three days.

These new Pentecostals concluded that this experience was something more than the Holiness movement had taught. At first, they thought of it as a “third work of grace,” leading to the common testimony of early Pentecostals: “Thank God, I am saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost.”



Stone's Folly - Topeka Kansas - site of outpouring of Holy Ghost, January 1, 1901



Charles Parham

Parham thought of the baptism of the Holy Ghost as an endowment of power for service. He thought that it would aid in missionary efforts in foreign countries. Parham called his new group the Apostolic Faith Movement. The group conducted meetings in Kansas and Missouri. In 1903, a significant breakthrough came when an almost-blind woman with an eye disease was completely healed. She invited Parham to conduct meetings in Galena, Kansas, and there more than 800 people were baptized in water, and hundreds received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. At least 1000 people testified that they were healed.

A convert in this revival was Howard Goss, who would later become one of the founders of the Assemblies of God, and then later the first General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church. As a young man he was an atheist, knowing nothing about Christianity. Upon attending one of Parham's meetings, he stated that he owed his conversion to Christianity to hearing people speak in other tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:22 (NLT) So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers . . .

In 1905, Parham went to Orchard, Texas, not far from Houston. Goss went with him with other student workers in the ministry. Goss and others received the baptism of the Holy Spirit while on a train. He spoke in other tongues for one week; it was two weeks before he could preach again in English, so mighty was his baptism. The Apostolic Faith movement grew to about 13,000 people by 1906.

Parham's doctrine upheld most of the doctrines of conservative Protestantism, including the trinity and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Like the

Holiness preachers, he proclaimed sanctification as a second work of grace and emphasized the need for a holy life.

In addition to the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of tongues, Parham believed in the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. As a young preacher he had received a dramatic healing. Parham attached tremendous significance to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He held it to be the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy of the latter rain, a sign of the soon coming of the Lord, the baptism that gives people full entrance into the church, a vital endowment of power that will enable the church to evangelize the world before the Lord's return, and the seal of protection during the Tribulation. He stated that it is the "full gospel" and "full salvation."

In 1902, Parham wrote that years earlier God had impressed upon him the importance of water baptism. He had not previously practiced baptism (having had Quaker influence). Parham wrote:

For years after entering the ministry, we taught no special baptism of water, believing the Baptism of the Holy Spirit the only essential one; having been marvelously anointed from time to time and received the anointing that abideth, we put the question of water baptism aside.

One day, meditating alone in the woods, the Spirit said: - Have you obeyed every command you believe to be in the Word of God?

We answered, yes; the question repeated, the same answer given. The third time the question was asked, we answered no, - for like a flood the convincing evidence of the necessity of obedience rushed in upon us, how Peter said, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ [Acts 2:38]. Was not this one baptism?

Then came the second; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Again Peter proceeded at once to baptize Cornelius and all his house, who had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the Bible evidence of speaking in tongues. Thrusting aside all arguments, he said:

Can any man forbid water, that these should be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we (Acts 10:47).

Paul did not recognize the baptism of John to repentance as sufficient, but baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ before he would lay hands upon them that they might receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

These and other Scriptures were so convincing that the next day we were baptized by single immersion.

Years afterward, through reading many arguments and discussions on triune immersion, [we] were intellectually persuaded that it was right, and persuaded many of God's children to be baptized by this mode, although we were never baptized by triune immersion.

About two years ago, however, we found that for which we had searched . . . the cleansing of all unscriptural teachings . . . We can well remember when we sought God in this cleansing, how some of the teachings we had believed to be so

Scriptural and some we had loved so dearly and been the most preserving in propagating, were wiped from our minds . . .

So if you desire to witness a public confession of a clean conscience toward God and man, faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, you will be baptized by single immersion, signifying the death, burial, and resurrection; being baptized into the name of Jesus, into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; they are one when in Christ you become one with all.

Howard Goss testified that Parham baptized him in the name of Jesus Christ in 1903. By 1910, Parham was still baptizing in Jesus' name in the growing Pentecostal movement. However, "for the sake of unity," Parham reverted to the traditional trinitarian formula. When the Jesus Name controversy erupted a few years after that, Parham affirmed trinitarian theology and denounced the Oneness movement.

Revival Fires Burn in Wales

In 1904-1905, revival came to Wales in Great Britain through the desire of Evan Roberts, the son of a Welsh Calvinist Methodist family in Loughor, Wales. As a boy he was unusually serious and very diligent in his Christian life. He memorized verses of the Bible and was an attender of Moriah Chapel, a church about a mile from his home. Even at 13 years of age he began to develop a heart for a visitation from God. He later wrote "I said to myself: I will have the Spirit. And through all weathers and in spite of all difficulties I went to the meetings . . . for ten or eleven years I have prayed for revival. I could sit up all night to read or talk about revivals. It was the Spirit who moved me to think about revival."

After working in the coal mines and then as a smithy, he entered a preparatory college at Newcastle Emlyn, as a candidate for the ministry. It was 1903 and he was 25 years old.

It was at this time that he sought the Lord for more of His Spirit. He believed that he would be baptized in the Holy Spirit and sometimes his bed shook as he prayed. The Lord began to wake him at 1:00 a.m. for divine fellowship, when he would pray for four hours, returning to bed at 5:00 a.m. for another four hours sleep.

He visited a meeting and heard the evangelist pray "Lord, bend us". The Holy Spirit said to Evan, "That's what you need". At the following meeting Evan experienced a powerful filling with the Holy Spirit. *"I felt a living power pervading my bosom. It took my breath away and my legs trembled exceedingly. This living power became stronger and stronger as each one prayed, until I felt it would tear me apart. My whole bosom was a turmoil and if I had not prayed it would have burst . . . I fell on my knees with my arms over the seat in front of me. My face was bathed in perspiration, and the tears flowed in streams. I cried out 'Bend me, bend me!!' It was God's commending love which bent me . . . what a wave of peace flooded my bosom . . . I was filled with compassion for those who must bend at the judgment, and I wept. Following that, the salvation of the human soul was solemnly impressed*

on me. I felt ablaze with the desire to go through the length and breadth of Wales to tell of the Savior.” Evan began praying for a 100,000 soul revival and had two visions which encouraged him to believe it would happen.

He then felt led to return to his home town and conduct meetings with the young people of Loughor. With permission from the minister, he began the meetings, encouraging prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit on Moriah church. The meetings slowly increased in numbers and powerful waves of intercession swept over those gathered.

The Spirit began to be poured out. There was weeping, shouting, crying out, joy and brokenness. Some would shout out, “No more, Lord Jesus, or I’ll die,” meaning that their flesh couldn’t take any more of the mighty presence of God. This was the beginning of the Welsh Revival.

The meetings then moved to wherever Evan felt led to go. A singing group of sisters traveled with Roberts. The meetings often began with intense intercession, urging surrender to God, and giving testimony. Evan would often be seen on his knees pleading for God’s mercy, with tears. The crowds would come, moved by wave after wave of the Spirit’s presence. Spontaneous prayer, confession, testimony and song erupted in all the meetings. Evan, or his helpers, would approach those in spiritual distress and urge them to surrender to Christ. No musical instruments were played and, often, there would be no preaching. Yet the crowds continued to come and thousands professed conversion.

The meetings often went on until the early hours of the morning. Evan and his team would go home, sleep for 2–3 hours and be back at the pit-head (coal mines) by 5 a.m., urging the miners coming off night duty to come to chapel meetings.

The revival spread like wildfire all over Wales. It is estimated that 100,000 people were converted in nine months. Other leaders also experienced the presence of God. Hundreds of overseas visitors flocked to Wales to witness the revival and many took revival fire back to their own land.

But the intense presence began to take its toll on Evan. Though he was clearly used by God and was sensitive to the Holy Spirit, he broke down under the unrelenting schedule and withdrew from public meetings. Accusation and criticism followed and further physical and emotional breakdown ensued. Converts became confused, and the revival in Wales dwindled. However, it was part of the beginning of a great move of the Holy Spirit in this world in the 20th century.

William Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival

One of Parham’s students in Houston was William J. Seymour (1870-1922). Seymour, the son of former slaves, was a black Holiness minister who was blind in one eye. In early 1906, Seymour traveled to Los Angeles in response to an invitation from a small Holiness church there.

Seymour preached the Pentecostal message in Los Angeles, even though he himself had not yet received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The leader of the

church rejected his message and locked Seymour out of the church (she later joined the movement, however). He continued services in the homes of two sympathetic families. In these home services, the Holy Spirit was poured out on many of the attenders. After a few days, Seymour himself received the baptism.

The small group rented an old, two story building on Azusa Street in Los Angeles and began holding services on April 15. The Azusa Street Mission held services daily for three years, from 1906 - 1909. Many miracles, healings, and baptisms of the Holy Spirit occurred. There were documented accounts of the dead being raised. The meetings were described as having spontaneous, demonstrative worship and strong moves of the Spirit. They were racially integrated - an amazing development in that segregated, prejudiced time. Blacks and whites, men and women, served in public leadership and ministry roles.

Galatians 3:26-28 (NKJV) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.



William Seymour



Azusa Street Mission

While Parham and his students initiated the 20th century Pentecostal movement, and while it continued in Wales through Evan Roberts, it was the Azusa Street revival that spread the Pentecostal message throughout the world. In September, 1906, Seymour began publishing the news of the revival in a paper called *The Apostolic Faith*. Ministers, missionaries, and lay members from across the United States and around the world flocked to Los Angeles and received the Holy Ghost, carrying the message everywhere. Many who could not attend nevertheless read the news of the revival and sought and received the same experience for themselves.

On April 18, 1906, *The Los Angeles Times* published its first report of the revival. The article was entitled, "*Weird Babel of Tongues,*" with these subtitles: : "*New Sect of Fanatics is Breaking Loose. Wild Scene Last Night on Azusa Street. Gurgle of Wordless Talk by a Sister.*"

Los Angeles Daily Times

WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1906.

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The first paragraph stated:

Breathing strange utterances and mouthing a creed which it would seem no sane mortal could understand, the newest religious sect has started in Los Angeles. Meetings are held in a tumble-down shack on Azusa Street, near San Pedro Street, and the devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal.

Later in the day, a special edition of the newspaper featured the great San Francisco earthquake, in which it reported that 452 lives were lost (later reports said as many as 700). It included the following article on the first page:

Much strange phenomena was witnessed by this reporter at the Azusa Street Mission yesterday, as I was there for the Sunday morning worship service.

The sight that greeted my eyes as I entered into the small building seemed to be commonplace enough. The old wood-slatted pews seated about twenty people, mostly from the lower scale of the social ladder. There were a couple of the parishioners that seemed to be of the wealthier class, however. All of these faced the black man standing behind the slender wooden pulpit.

The "worship" began with prayer; prayer that was conducted in a manner totally strange to me. All hands were uplifted and the parishioners began to audibly speak the requests, interspersing them with much cries of "Amen," "Hallelujah," and "Praise the Lord."

The singing was also different, as loud, boisterous numbers were sung in place of the conventional hymns. I was shocked to my Sunday school roots as the people left their seats and began jumping up and down, and running around the building.

At one point during the sermon, a hush fell over the congregation and an elderly man began to utter strange, guttural sounds. This, of course, was the much

discussed “glossalalia,” the supposed speaking in tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit.

Surprisingly enough, after the sermon, the people seemed normal enough, socializing and speaking of everyday life. I found the pastor, Brother Seymour, to be a very affable fellow.

What is my conclusion?

Well, the worship was shockingly different, unlike anything I had ever seen before. It would be easy to say that it is conceived of by Satan himself. However, since the reports of happenings at Azusa Street Mission are spreading like wildfire all over southern California, we shall let time be the judge.



The Apostolic Faith contained the following description in the November 1906 issue:

Here you find a mighty Pentecostal revival going on from ten o'clock in the morning till about twelve at night . . .

There is such power in the preaching of the Word in the Spirit that people are shaken on the benches. Coming to the altar, many fall prostrate under the power of God, and often come out speaking in tongues. Sometimes the power falls on people and they are wrought upon by the Spirit during testimony or preaching and receive Bible experiences . . .

The demonstrations are not the shouting, clapping or jumping so often seen in camp meetings. There is a shaking such as the early Quakers had and which the old Methodists called the “jerks.” It is while under the power of the Spirit you see the hands raised and hear speaking in tongues. While one sings a song learned from heaven with a shining face, the tears will be trickling down other faces. Many receive the Spirit through the laying on of hands . . .

Little children from eight to twelve years stand upon the altar bench and testify to the baptism with the Holy Ghost and speak in tongues. In the children's meetings, little tots get down and seek the Lord.

It is noticeable how free all nationalities feel . . . No instrument that God can use is rejected on account of color or dress or lack of education . . .

The singing is characterized by freedom . . . Often one will rise and sing a familiar song in a new tongue.

The Azusa Street participants considered that a person was “saved” by the “first work” of grace (conversion), before sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, yet they spoke of all three experiences as part of “Bible salvation.” They spoke of the baptism of the Holy Ghost as the decisive turning point in their lives. Although they identified previous experiences of conversion and sanctification, their testimonies typically described the baptism of the Holy Ghost as the time they experienced the full saving power of Jesus Christ.

In 1907, Seymour wrote: *“Beloved, when we receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, we surely will speak in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. We are not seeking for tongues, but we are seeking the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire.”* There were many reports of people from other countries coming to Azusa Street and hearing their native languages spoken by people who received the Holy Ghost. There were also reports of people seeing flames of fire and clouds of glory.

The revival at Azusa Street dwindled in 1909. It seems a sad end, but after the revival at Azusa Street died, Pentecostal revival sprang up again in thousands of works in the United States and around the world. After Seymour’s death in 1922, his wife carried on as pastor until her health failed. The building was demolished in 1931.

Hardships of Early Pentecostal Pioneers

The early Pentecostals encountered all kinds of opposition and persecution. The existing denominations (especially the Holiness groups and Fundamentalists) typically forced them out, denounced them, ridiculed them as “Holy Rollers,” and said they were of the devil. Prominent Holiness leaders said the Pentecostal movement was “the last vomit of Satan,” “emphatically not of God,” “wicked and adulterous,” “anti-Christian,” “sensual and devilish.” Others called the movement “heresy” and a “cult.” Pentecostal workers were threatened, beaten, shot at, and tarred and feathered. They were pelted with rocks and with rotten fruit, vegetables and eggs. Tent ropes were slashed, and tents and buildings were set afire. Drinking water was poisoned.

Many of the early Pentecostals sacrificed greatly to spread the gospel. They lived by faith and started churches in tents, brush arbors, storefronts, and rented halls. One historian says:

These lived often in extreme poverty, going out with little or no money, seldom knowing where they would spend the night, or how they would get their next meal, sleeping in barns, tents and parks, or on the wooden benches of mission halls, and sometimes in jail. Bands of workers would pool their funds, buy a tent or rent a hall, and live communally in the meeting place, subsisting at times on flour and water, or

rice, or sardines and sausages . . . The Pentecostals found their chief asset in the spirit of sacrifice and the enormous drive of their leaders.

Conclusion

The ministry and teaching of Charles Parham brought about the dawn of the modern Pentecostal movement. The distinctive message that he and his students introduced was *the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues*.

The occasion was by no means the first time since Bible days that someone had received the Holy Spirit with this evidence, but it was the first recorded time in modern church history when people sought for and received the Holy Spirit with the expectation of speaking in other tongues. This is what set the Pentecostal movement apart from earlier outpourings of the Spirit. Pentecostals proclaimed this to be the norm.

William Seymour is also significant in church history since the Azusa Street revival that he led became the impetus for *the worldwide spread of Pentecostalism*. Almost every Pentecostal organization in the world owes its existence, directly or indirectly, to Seymour's Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles.

The Pentecostal movement was the next step in the Scriptural extension of the ideas of the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's, the Methodist revival of the 1700's, and the Holiness movement of the 1800's. It was the next step in the restoration of apostolic doctrine and experience to professing Christendom.

The modern Pentecostal movement did not originate solely with one person, and grew beyond any one person's leadership. It was the sovereign move of God in response to the spiritual hunger and quest of thousands of sincere believers.