

## Beware of Satan's Deception.

September 25, 2016

William Seymour, was the leader of the spiritual awakening called Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906 that swept through America and abroad within a few years. William was a black man whose parents had been slaves before the Civil War and the negative attitude towards black people was still engrained in American culture. William had heard the gospel message from a Holiness pastor in Texas as a young man and desired to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. He was not allowed to enter the sanctuary of the church, but the pastor graciously allowed him to sit outside the door and listen to the service. He was not allowed to be in the same room as the white congregation so he could not go to the front altar for prayer, but the pastor did teach him the Scriptures. So intent was his desire to know God, William drank in the words that promised him eternal life and a chance to have a new heart. He felt the call to proclaim to others what he had learned for himself and he took the message to Los Angeles and began telling others of the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit that began after the ascension of Jesus Christ and is still offered to believers today. William fasted and prayed consistently and others began to join him in seeking God to send a revival to our country. Many wonderful miracles took place with physical healings, spiritual awakening, and signs and wonders from the visitation of the Holy Spirit and word spread across America of the amazing works of God being brought through the ministry of William Seymour. However, in time, William invited his mentor to come to Los Angeles and be a part of what God was doing. He desired to share the good news with his mentor and invited him to speak to the crowd of believers who were attending the services. Pastor Purnam, a white preacher, after arriving and seeing the gifts of the Holy Spirit being manifested in a humble makeshift church building located in the poorest section of the city, with people from all races led by a black man who claimed Mr. Parham as his "father in the faith", worshipping and praising God in the same room made Mr. Parham furious. William Seymour welcomed Mr. Parham and after introducing him to the congregation, turned the service over to him. Mr. Parham was proud of the name he had made for himself. He had become a popular choice for wealthy white churches around the country. He was not impressed with what he saw in this lowly place, and wanted no part of it. He stood up and said, "God is sick to his stomach." He then walked out of the service and never returned. He called the movement a work of Satan and spread his negative opinion about the movement everywhere he went. The sad part of this story is that Mr. Parham's ministry went downhill from that point on and he eventually was arrested for sexual misconduct. His reputation deteriorated and he died defeated with just a few followers remaining loyal to him at his side.

The Jews rejected Jesus as he was born into a poor family, was born in a stable, and was raised as a carpenter's son. He wasn't even handsome and there was nothing about him that would cause people to desire him to be a king.

The early Christians faced this same situation. The Jews were God's chosen people and they were entrusted with the building of the infant church of Jesus Christ. There were cultural barriers, religious barriers, and social barriers that separated the Jews from people of other nations. Jesus broke those barriers when he gave his life on the cross for the salvation of the world. While he ministered to the multitudes, he alluded to the fact that salvation would be offered to "whosoever" would believe. In Acts chapter 9, Saul of Tarsus is presented as a persecutor of the believers in Jesus Christ. He hated the new Christians and refused to accept the new covenant that threatened to destroy the "old laws."

He was determined to destroy this movement before it invaded the traditional Jewish life that he had grown up with and cherished. However, God had a plan for Saul and after Saul had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, he was converted and became a fearless, powerful Apostle whose influence and writings have transformed many hearts and caused them to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. He was also sent by the Holy Spirit to build churches around the world and to teach and preach to "whosoever", not just to the Jews.

You can read his testimony in Acts 9 and also Acts 26. In Acts 26, Paul, (the former Saul) had been arrested and brought before King Agrippa to answer to charges of spreading the gospel, converting people to Christianity and giving them hope of eternal life. Paul explained to the king how that he had persecuted the Christians, putting many to death and causing people to blaspheme and throwing many into prisons until he met Jesus on the way to Damascus. Then he saw a heavenly light and Jesus revealed himself to Saul and commissioned him to turn away from the direction he was heading and was given a new vision which he was now pursuing. God sent him to preach and compel Jews and Gentiles alike to believe and receive eternal life from Jesus Christ, God's Son.

After his speech, King Agrippa stated, "You have almost persuaded me to be a Christian."

In Acts 10, a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band enters the picture. He is a praying man, fearing God with his entire house, and one who is generous in his giving to the needy. God gave him a vision of a man that he was to send for who would tell him what he ought to do. After this experience, Cornelius sent for his two servants that were of his household and a devout soldier and told them of his heavenly vision. He then sent them to Joppa to inquire of a man called Peter. In the meantime, Peter was on the rooftop of a house praying when he also had a vision that he didn't understand the meaning of since it had to do with changing his dietary customs to eat things that were considered unclean in the Jewish culture. However, shortly after the vision, the men arrived at the gate of the house where he was staying and asked to speak to him. While Peter was meditating on this, the Holy Spirit spoke to him "go with these men and don't doubt because I have sent them". The men explained to him that Cornelius, a devout and righteous man had seen an angel and was told to send for Peter because he had a message to bring to them. When they arrived at Cornelius' house, Cornelius fell down and worshipped Peter. Peter told him not to do that for he was a man just as Cornelius was. Peter entered the house

after reminding Cornelius that it was unlawful for Jews to keep company with Gentiles, but God had revealed that he was not to segregate himself from people of other nations any longer.

He asked Cornelius why he sent for him. Cornelius explained about his praying, seeing a vision and being told to send for Peter who was lodging in a house in Joppa so he sent his servants to ask Peter to come to tell them what they should do. He had everyone in his house present to hear what Peter had to say. In verse 34, Peter said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him." He then presented the gospel of Jesus Christ to the room filled with Cornelius' household. The birth of Jesus, his ministry, death, burial and resurrection were explained in detail and Peter explained that the disciples were witnesses to these events and were commissioned to build the church of Jesus Christ after Jesus returned to his Father. The Holy Ghost had descended as tongues of fire that sat on each of the 120 that were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem and they spoke languages that they had never been exposed to or taught by human means. While Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on all those who heard his words. Peter and the men who were with him were astonished as they witnessed the Holy Spirit falling on Gentiles. They heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God with their voices. Peter asked, "Can anyone forbid them baptism for they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" He then commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter took heat from other believers because he had taken the gospel to Gentiles. But Peter told them all the details of the events leading up to his journey and the result of his preaching to Cornelius and his household. He then said, "Then I remembered the word of the Lord how he said, "John indeed baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Peter said that as he witnessed the Holy Ghost falling on these believers in the same manner as he had seen on the day of Pentecost, who was he to withstand the Lord? This convinced the Jews that God had also accepted Gentiles and they were not to withhold the blessing from others outside of the Jewish race.

Persecution of the church continued throughout the Scriptures but the power of God spread like a forest fire in a dry season. The flames of faith continued and flourished and many people were brought into the kingdom of God though the price was paid in blood.

In Acts 5:34, a man named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law who had a good reputation among the Jews, was present when the chief priests were discussing how to stop the miracles and mighty works of God that was being demonstrated among the people. Many were accepting the gospel message and the city was in an uproar. The chief priests were filled with indignation and were determined to put an end to the apostles' endeavor so the Apostles were placed in prison. However an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and set them free. The angel told them to go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

They obeyed the voice and the officers of the jail realized that something amazing had happened because all the locks were in place and the guards had not seen anyone leave, yet there they were preaching out on the streets. The chief priests, upon hearing this had the Apostles brought to them and after listening to them determined that the only way to stop the movement was to slay them. Gamaliel stood up, had the apostles removed from the room and began to reason with the religious leaders. He warned them to be careful what they were determined to do with these men. He spoke about several other religious leaders who had exalted themselves among the people, gathered a following and after the leader died, they dispersed and the movement died out. There were leaders who convinced people to follow them and obey their teachings that were self-proclaimed prophets who led people astray and they fizzled out when the leader died. He recommended that the chief priests refrain from their plans to kill these men. If their counsel or works were of men, it would come to nothing on its own. However, if it was of God, they could not overthrow it because no one can fight against God and win. The chief priests listened to the counsel, had the apostles beaten and set them free after warning them not to speak in the name of Jesus. However the apostles departed from the presence of the counsel rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple and in every house, they continued to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

There are those who fight against Christians and try to turn people against the Biblical teachings of the word of God. If you stand with Bible believing, God fearing believers, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, you can expect to get persecuted for your faith. However, just as William Seymour saw the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit at the turn of the century, God is still looking for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and are willing to seek him in prayer, reading the word and obedience. It doesn't matter your status in society, your past life, or whether you are male or female, God is looking for those who earnestly believe and are willing to spread the gospel to others. He isn't willing that any should perish and the word says that he will use those who the world looks down upon to confound those who the world respects as wise. ~~Don't allow yourself to be deceived.~~ Those who claim the title of "Christian" must have the fruit of the spirit working in their lives. The apostles didn't make any distinction between people; all were invited to become part of the body of Christ. Race, financial status, rich or poor, male or female, young or old, strong or weak, those who are in prison or those who are model citizens; all can partake of the blessings that God has in store for those who love him. He calls and invites us to enter into a covenant with him and to spend eternity with the saints of God. I pray that you will accept the invitation and learn about the position that God has for you to fulfill with your life. God chose a humble, uneducated black man who had nothing of life's advantages, to preach the gospel and be filled with power that had fallen on the day of Pentecost and still continues today. He will use you if you will yield to the Spirit of God and set aside your own desires and ambitions, take up the cross and follow Him!