

Chapter 27

Dedication of the Temple

We were blessed with a tremendous revival totally unexpected and unplanned just as our Temple, the Armory, was nearing completion. At first we feared that the Revival might hinder our efforts toward the rapid fulfillment of our long-awaited dream. Even before the Revival, it had seemed as though there were not enough minutes in a day – so many tasks remained to be performed, so many details cried for our attention. It seemed we could not possibly assume another undertaking. Yet, as both the Revival and the work on the Temple progressed, we seemed to draw strength from the one to complete the other. The two projects seemed to parallel each other, forming a track as it were, to guide our daily efforts.

With God's benevolence and guidance we were able to supervise the interior decoration of the Temple, yet give our undivided attention to the meetings which were being held day and night. True, there were times when it seemed that weariness would force me to slacken my pace, to neglect something. Then it seemed as though I would receive a refreshing from some supernatural well, and once again I would have the strength to drive forward. Again and again I saw it proved that "His callings are His enabling." Finally, the end was in sight. With a joy that defies all description, we announced that the opening service would be held on the afternoon of Sunday, February 13, 1949.

No sooner had we set a date for the opening than time seemed to rush by even more quickly than before. On the day before the scheduled opening much still remained to be done, so much that I feared it could not be accomplished in time. There were drapes to be hung; there were still seats to be washed, and many other time-consuming tasks too numerous to mention. The more we thought about the work that still lay ahead of us, the more we despaired that we would be able to finish it in time for the opening for which so many people had waited so long.

From time to time I pictured myself as a tightrope walker performing on a high wire. At one end of my balancing pole was the Revival, at the other was the Temple equally demanding of my time and

strength. Far below my congregation urged me on, while I prayed to God to guide every footstep in this tremendous undertaking. But now the picture was being completed, and the end was only a step away. Slowly I gazed around the building: first at the majestic new organ just waiting for the first thundering chord to be struck, next at the splendid new piano, then at the handsome pulpit from where I hoped to speak the Word of God. My eyes swept across the new carpeting, a \$5,000 expenditure. Then up along the magnificent draperies which cost an equal amount.

Finally my eyes came to rest upon the beautiful hand painting of where Christ was baptized at the Jordan, now in its place of honor upon the wall. It did not seem possible that all of this splendor, all of this comfort and beauty could belong to us - a group who had experienced the humblest of beginnings in the smallest, most barren of churches, where there had not even been song books, let alone an organ or piano. Still even harder to recall, there had not even been chairs to sit on or a pulpit to speak from. Our only credit had been our clean floors kept immaculate by frequent and vigorous scrubblings. But right here I want to say how God was just as much among us there in our humble surroundings as He would be in this beautiful building.

With renewed zeal, we plunged in to help with the work that remained to be done. All through the day we worked, pausing only for a hastily prepared lunch. Through Saturday night and well into Sunday morning we worked, attending to every last minor detail. Then finally all was in readiness. Exhausted but exultant, we stood back to take one last look at what had taken so much hard work and so long to accomplish. Once again I gazed unbelievably at this dream that had now become a reality. How I wished that our organist were there to strike up a triumphant march! Then I realized that my real joy was not in knowing that we had built a beautiful Temple, but in knowing that we were serving God, in knowing that He was with us now just as He had been with us in the little church so many years ago. There can be no joy in any accomplishment or in any possessions unless we have God's presence.

Even though we were fatigued from our long hours of work, we were reluctant to leave the Temple and take what little rest our excited minds would permit us. When I awoke Sunday morning, however, there was no question of fatigue but rather a feeling of apprehension and expectation. In my mind I was asking myself over and over again, "Where will we get enough people to fill a place as large as this

When I arrived at the Temple, this fear stayed with me. Rather than see for myself, I walked up to a young lady who was seated at the piano and asked,

“Are there many here yet?”

She turned to me very nonchalantly and said,

“It's full.”

My ears did not believe her. I thought that perhaps she had misunderstood me. So I said,

“You do not understand what I just asked. Are there many people in the auditorium yet?”

Again she replied, “It's full!”

I was still convinced she had not understood my question, so I decided to try another approach and asked,

“How about the balcony? Is there anyone up there yet?”

Once again she turned around to face me, this time rather impatiently. Then very slowly and deliberately, she stated,

“I said, it's FULL!”

And full it was! To my utter amazement, we walked out on the platform to find that every available seat in the main auditorium had been taken and extra chairs had been set up in the aisles. The platform was jammed. The balcony was filled. People were sitting on the stairway to the balcony and lined up against the back wall, even the foyer was full. The downstairs auditorium,²⁴ was filled to capacity. These people were reached by a loudspeaker. Even more impressive, the bus drivers from the DSR (Detroit's City transportation system) turned away 1,700 people by actual ticker count.

When my senses had stopped swirling, I heard the murmur of the thousands assembled before me. They were marveling in whispers at the splendor and the presence of God that surrounded them. My own happiness and gratitude soared until it seemed it could no longer be contained. As the second hand raced one last time around the clock, I rejoiced inwardly with our Father that we had been able to carry out His instructions. The Armory was open!

* * *

²⁴ The “downstairs auditorium” was main auditorium of the Basement Church.

The day of dedication of the Temple will be a day never to be forgotten by all who were able to get into the buildings and even by those who were not able to get in. They saw the Hand of God in causing this enormous Armory to be erected. They saw God stir the hearts of people everywhere to fill not only the new Temple but also the lower auditorium. They saw the multitude still longing to get in but turned away because there was no room.

Not only was the Temple filled to capacity with people, but it was also filled with the glory and presence of God. Such singing, such worshiping of God, such prophecies, such supernatural utterances as we heard from the lips of God's ordained ministers will always remain the greatest wonderment of our lives. It seemed the time just flew. People were being saved, filled with the Holy Spirit, confirmed, and delivered. Everyone was ministering to one another. God let us see by actual demonstration before our very eyes the ministry of the Body of Christ. The teaching of the Body of Christ²⁵ had not been much in evidence up until this time, but God began to teach through His ministers by precept and example the tremendous truths of the hour. Never had we heard such preaching.

The building was jammed at every service throughout the day. It just seemed the day was too short. Far into the night people could be found here and there in the building waiting before God, wanting their portion. Certainly this was a day of heaven on earth. We called the building "A Memorial to His Faithfulness," and everyone present with one consent said, "Yes, we have seen the faithfulness of God as never before."

In the weeks that followed, we had to have police protection and help to empty the building for ventilation between services and to give those who had not been able to attend one service the opportunity of getting into the next service. We had services day and night. Never in my life have I seen people so full of expectancy, so hungry, so anxious to hear from God as we saw in the early days of this Latter Rain Revival.

²⁵ The teaching of the Body of Christ is that Jesus is the Head of the Church and His Church is made up of different "parts." Some people are called to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers for the purpose of perfecting (maturing) believers. Others are called to the ministry of helps, government (administration), healing, mercy, etc. Though our gifts may be different, though our callings are not the same, we are to operate in unity, to function as one.

God was doing a new thing in the earth. We saw denominational barriers and color barriers fade into oblivion as God poured out His Spirit. We saw the Body of Jesus Christ as we never saw it before. We saw that in Christ there is no division. There is neither male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Greek. We saw that by the Spirit of God, we are indeed made One! We saw the division because of doctrine, methods, and traditions fade away as each one of us was made conscious of Whom and in Whom we believe. We found that in getting our faith centered where it should be centered, our faith put back in God where it should be, the other things in which we did not agree seemed very trivial and of less importance.

We saw groups who had been baptized under different formulas coming together with an understanding that we had all been baptized by faith into the Lord Jesus Christ. People whom we could not love nor fellowship with, we suddenly found to be our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We saw for the first time that division is an awful thing. We found the denominational barriers gone, and we realized that we belonged to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We were beginning to understand by what we were seeing demonstrated and hearing preached, the reason God asked us to build an Armory to seat so many— a place where “soldiers of the Cross” would get their spiritual equipment. It seemed that this same understanding came to the multitude of people who attended our Dedication Convention which began on that glorious Sunday, February 13, 1949.

Note: The actual seating in the sanctuary turned out to be less than 3,000 people - much to Myrtle's dismay. When Bethesda moved from Detroit to Sterling Heights, an essential requirement of the building program was for the sanctuary to seat 3,000 people to fulfill the number God had given Myrtle so long ago.



Bethesda Missionary Temple - Side View



Bethesda Missionary Temple - Front View