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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

SETH COOK REES
(Founder of the Pilgrim Holiness Church)

Seth C. Rees was born August 6, 1854, at Westfield, Hamilton County Indiana. He is of old Quaker stock, his ancestors for generations back being members of the Society of Friends. The spiritual life of his church was at a low ebb during his youth and early manhood. Worship was formal and often lifeless, and there was little power in the ministry. Of a very active and energetic nature, it is not surprising that in the absence of vital godliness in the church he became reckless and godless. When he was nineteen years of age, Calvin Pritchard, a revivalist of great piety and effectiveness, held meetings at Westfield. The thoughtless Quaker boy became deeply convicted. The memory and influence, of his guarded and conscientious boyhood drew him toward God. He says of his own experience: "The 'anxious seat' or 'penitent form' was not then used in our meetings, but at the close of a sermon preached 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven' all were requested to stand who desired the prayers of God's people. To the utter astonishment of a large congregation, almost all of whom knew me personally, I arose to my feet. I had not at that time the most remote idea of ever being converted. In fact, I had no thought that it was possible for me to be saved. I remember distinctly of saying to myself, 'I will give them a good subject for them to try their hand on.' No further request was made, and no one spoke to me about the step I had taken. To a similar invitation the next evening I stood up, more because I had done so the night before than anything else. But I now began to feel very serious, and when on First-Day night a different call was made, and all were asked to arise who sincerely desired to become Christians, I, in company with a number of others, promptly responded. Nothing more was said to me either publicly or privately but the dear Holy Spirit suggested to me that I attend the day meeting on Second-Day morning. As I entered the meeting-house yard a neighbor said, 'Will thee come and sit with me?' and without waiting for an answer, he led the way to a seat much farther forward than I had been accustomed to occupy since a boy. I had not long been seated when the Spirit fell upon the congregation, and the meeting proved to be one of testimony and confession. When the service as well under way, a strange power came over me, and I arose to my feet and confessed I was an awful sinner. I was not on my feet thirty seconds, but I sat down a saint! It seemed as if all heaven dropped into my soul. Up to that time I had not attempted to pray. I had not shed a tear. Now my

eyes were fountains, and I wept like rain. The complexion of everything changed. Every blade of grass, every drop of water, and every bird of forest and field seemed to dance with delight."

Immediately after his conversion Seth C. Rees began to preach. He was very successful, and held meetings in various parts of Indiana and Ohio. But soon the Spirit convicted him for his need of entire sanctification. He says: "Under the search-light of the ministry of such men as David B. Updegraff or Dr. Dougan Clark, I would feel keenly conscious of a shortage in my experience. Again and again have I rushed from the meeting into the woods or open country, by day or by night, to weep and cry to God for hours. My suffering under conviction for inbred sin greatly surpassed anything I endured as an awakened sinner. At one time, after crying earnestly for deliverance from the 'old man,' and after hours of agony, I began to be filled with a sense of sinking, sinking, and it seemed as if I were dying. Then I began to say, 'Yes,' to the Lord. 'Yes! Yes! Amen! Amen! Amen!' The past, the present, the future, all the unknown, my reputation, my all, went upon God's altar. I 'died hard.' but I 'died sure.' At last there began to creep into my soul a tranquil feeling, a holy hush, a death-like stillness, a sweet, placid 'second rest,' and I knew that I was sanctified wholly. The Holy Ghost came in consciously and dispelled all my doubts, filling me with Himself. "

Immediately after his "Pentecost" God opened fields of great usefulness to this Friend minister. In pastorates in Ohio, Michigan and Rhode Island he had phenomenal success. For two years he generated the work of the Church of Emmanuel, in Providence, R. I. Since then he has given himself wholly to Pentecostal evangelism. He travels widely, and everywhere God honors the stalwart truth which he proclaims. He is President of Portsmouth Camp Meeting, a meeting which has become well known for its primitive simplicity and apostolic power. He is author of "The Ideal Pentecostal Church," a book widely circulated among God's people.

The translation of Hulda A. Rees, his wife, last June [1894] was a grievous blow to him, and one from which he has by no means recovered. But in spite of his great sorrow he has pushed on with the work of full salvation, preaching in many camps, such as Portsmouth, Merrick, National Park, Mountain Lake Park, Pitman Grove, and Ocean Grove.

Last September, [1894] in a meeting held in Cincinnati, O., for the permanent organization of the International Holiness Union, he was selected to act as President. The union was organized with a view to reaching a greater number of people with the gospel of full salvation, and it is planned to carry the work to all parts of the world.

Brother Rees is ever active in the work of the Lord, either with tongue or pen, and God is blessing him to the aid of thousands of souls. May God spare him for many years' service in His vineyard. [written by Martin Wells Knapp]

Source: "Pentecostal Messengers" by Martin Wells Knapp

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