



The Story of Pentecost

Chapter 7

"You can judge of the utter amazement of these foreigners not only at the startling intelligence they heard (probably for the first time) concerning the miraculous career of our Lord, and the remarkable manner in which the news was imparted, but by the wonderful Salvation offered them. Through this Christ they heard of the marvellous deliverance from the guilt, power, pollution – nay, from the very indwelling – of sin provided for them and for their children.

"Everybody wanted to hear more. They ran in all directions, and talked as they ran, only stopping to question those who seemed likely to be able to in any way enlighten them further as to the character of these marvels.

"A particular gathering, however, gradually absorbed the bulk of attention. On the steps of one of the most public gates of the inner Court of the Temple, right on the main stream of the pedestrian traffic, Peter and John had stationed themselves, and were to be seen with an immense crowd of eager hearers, growing larger and larger every minute.

"Thomas, to the joyful surprise of all concerned, was the first to speak, and then some of the other disciples gave their testimonies. Amongst these was Lazarus, whom the Master had raised from the dead. As he stood forth the buzz of wonder and the jargon of controversy on the outskirts of the crowd suddenly ceased, while he related the marvellous story of his coming back to life.

"No sooner had Lazarus finished than, impelled by the Spirit within me, I forced my way through the throng, took his position, and told the story of my own departure from life; my mother's grief; the solemn funeral; the unexpected appearance of the Master; the simple words He spoke; and my utterly indescribable feelings when I found myself in my mother's arms, a living man once more.



Then John spoke. His address I can never forget, nor the assemblage who listened to it, nor the results that followed. It was indeed a history-making event.

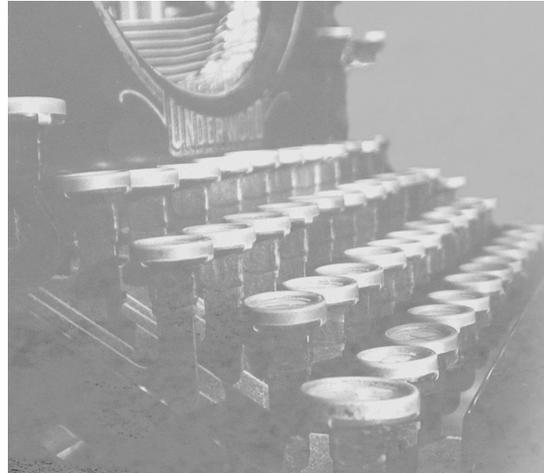
Take the crowd. Not only were there clustered together, listening as though their lives depended upon every word, the representatives of fifty different nations, but men belonging to each of the classes in Jerusalem who had been so prominent in the incidents of the few previous weeks.

Scattered amongst the throng were hundreds who were, more or less, secret believers in the claims of our Lord; there were many who had either been themselves the subjects of His miraculous power or witnesses of it as shown in others; there were crowds who were full of curiosity to hear more about the new sect, and there were enemies without number.

The very Priests and Elders, and members of the High Council, whose hatred had brought about the destruction of our dear Master, were there, and at every mention of His name they cursed Him, either aloud or under their breath, with even greater enmity than they did when they saw Him standing at Pilate's bar. For, was not the scene passing before their eyes at once the greatest of surprises and the bitterest of disappointments? They thought the bloody tragedy of the Cross had stamped out the Galilean heresy; yet here it was, a living power, not only forcing itself on the attention of Jerusalem, but advertising its claims in the presence of representatives from every corner of the civilised world.

Then came Peter's speech. If his audience appeared remarkable, his address was more remarkable still. I had heard him talk with interest in our small assemblies during the life of the Master. I had heard him with riveted attention in the recent upper room gatherings, but the speech he made to that miscellaneous multitude was one of the greatest surprises of my earthly career.

He appeared to me a perfectly changed individual. He was a new man. He was a Divinely-inspired man. He was a man on fire. His address was not what men would call eloquence, or oratory, or argument, so far as fine phrases go. It was all that, and a thousand times more. It was a continuous stream of burning words that compelled



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conviction, made every ear listen, every brain understand, every heart feel, and every unprejudiced mind assent to every truth he maintained, and every fact he described. Any attempt to report it would have been useless. No language could describe it. It must have been heard, and heard under the exciting circumstances of the hour, to be understood, much more to be appreciated."

"And the effects?" I interjected.

"Yes, the effects," Samuel replied. "I stood and watched the faces of the crowd so far as my eye could observe them. I do not know how Caiaphas, the High Priest, felt, although he was pointed out to me as listening on the fringe of the assembly. Neither could I tell what were the feelings of Pilate's wife, who, veiled, surrounded, and hidden by a group of guards, could be plainly seen was not one of Peter's least interested hearers.

But the human countenance is a tell-tale affair, and I could see conviction gradually revealing itself on the faces of almost everyone within the circle of my vision. That conviction grew deeper and deeper as Peter proceeded ; and when he came to the declaration that the Great Father was going to bring good out of the evil that had been done ; and that, instead of sending the whole nation to destruction, He was going to prolong the days of their visitation, and make this Christ whom they had murdered the Author of temporal and everlasting salvation to them and to their children, if at this late hour they would accept Him, tears began to flow in all directions, hearts were broken, and multitudes fell on their knees, crying 'What must I do to be saved?'

The day had been a succession of surprises, and now our eyes looked upon the greatest wonder of all. Here were the men who had murdered our Lord – whom we had been told over and over again would murder us if we mentioned His name in public; who had cursed us from the commencement of the campaign – instead of proceeding to hale us before the authorities, and consign us to a bloody death, they were actually on their knees asking how to become Soldiers with us, and what they must do to receive the Salvation which we published, and for which our Master died.



"That Penitent-Form, as you call it," Samuel proceeded, "was one of the most striking scenes our poor world ever looked upon. I see it now. It was engraved upon my memory at the hour, and it has never been erased. Again I see the excited assemblage, and again I hear their self-condemnations and cries for mercy, and promises of faithfulness, if that mercy could only now be given.

Can there ever be such a motley throng kneeling at the Saviour's feet again? I question it. For instance, here are a number of the class so common in all ages – the Indifferentists, who, at the Crucifixion, passed by on the other side, too intent on their pleasures or their business to give even so much as a look on the Christ who, at that very moment, was in the agony of death.

"Here is the very Roman soldier who thrust the spear into the Redeemer's side; he had been pounced upon in the street by some disciple, and captured by hearing him tell his experience in his own mother tongue. Yonder is the Priest who was foremost in the mob that, with staves and lanterns, led on by Judas, arrested their Victim in the Garden. Not far from him kneels one of the false witnesses who, bribed for the occasion, joined in swearing the Master's life away.

"Near by is a group of the roughs who, in the early hours of that fatal morning, shrieked in the ear of Pilate, 'Away with Him, Crucify Him, crucify Him. His Blood be upon us and on our children.'

"And there is the man who, amidst the jeering laughter of the Jews, placed the mocking reed in His hand, and then spat on His sacred face.

"Further away is a man smiting his breast, and asking the question 'Can I ever be forgiven?' He is the Sadducee who taunted Him in His very death agony with the gibe: 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save;' while in and out, and all among the crowd, are to be seen people who followed Him in prosperity, but who – when He came to speak of the sufferings and death that awaited Him at Jerusalem – cowardly forsook His cause and cruelly left Him to His fate.

"We had a busy time that day. We began early and finished up late. The healing of



these wounded souls was no easy task; but it was quite as important, if not actually as difficult, as the wounding of them. Still, we persevered, and, one by one, the penitents came into liberty."

It was, indeed, a triumphant visitation. I do not know whether any captious person disapproved in those days of the publication of the results of soul-saving efforts; but if they did, the inspired historian, utterly regardless of their objections, himself proclaimed, in a record that will last for ever, that the day's work was crowned with the conversion of three thousand souls.

Here my informant ceased speaking. Some celestial duty called him away. On my attempting to express my gratitude for his great kindness, he embraced me, planted a kiss upon my brow; bade me be faithful; and then, with an entrancing smile of pleasing anticipation, said, "We shall meet again!" and disappeared.