

THE PULPIT.

AN ELOQUENT SUNDAY SERMON BY DR. WILLIAM J. THOMPSON.

Subject: The Ascension.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—In the Simpson M. E. Church Sunday morning, the pastor, the Rev. Dr. William J. Thompson, preached on "The Ascension." The text was from Luke 24:51: "And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven." Dr. Thompson said:

Concerning the crucifixion the Scripture gives month, day, hour, participants—much minutiae. Concerning the resurrection no mention is made of the first heart-beat, only the fact of the empty tomb and the risen Saviour. So minute is the account of the ascension.

The length of those narratives indicates our limited knowledge. Death so common would have fullest mention. The resurrection, contrary to all experience, would admit of only the fact, supported by "irrefragable signs." The ascension, contrary to the one law we believe to prevail throughout the universe—gravitation—and the entrance into the spirit realm, which baffles the imagination of embodied spirits, would call for the least mention.

Their importance, however, is inversely as the length of the narrative. Death in itself is failure; the resurrection declares Jesus to be the Son of God with power. The ascension to the right hand of God proclaims Him the ever-reigning sovereign.

The eagle-winged tyrant, death, spreads over the whole earth, pulls the last and best creation of God to a veritable conquest; wrenches from the human soul the organ of all its intellectual and spiritual expressions—the body, and deems it with "dust to dust." Jesus Christ, the mighty Prince of Life, conquered this conqueror!

Our loudest Easter hosannas are for His praise for this unrivaled achievement. This triumph, however, mighty as it is, is but a part of His life. Like the figure of a mathematic depending for its richness on what follows, so the riches of Easter depend on what follows in the life of Christ.

Napoleon Bonaparte used Marengo, Austerlitz and other victories as stepping stones to reach the heights of military power; where he swayed the sceptre from the Baltic to Southern Italy, and allied contentious nations as vassals or dependent states. He stood with his arm upon the Alps and exclaimed: "Hannibal is surpassed!" He led those soldiers beneath the pyramids with "Forty centuries look down upon you." France saluted him with: "Sire, your greatness is like that of the universe; he died before June 18, 1815, a glimmer of glory would have enfolded his whole career. But his life after this, and the defeat of Waterloo and five and one-half years in exile, leveled the summit of his career.

We are not without concern for our ex-presidents, lest some ill deed militate against their record in the high office. Some grains of comfort are extracted from our three martyred presidents—all of whom were snatched from us in the zenith of their fame, a fact which adds glory over their whole lives. Jesus Christ disarmed death of its mortal sting and led the powers of darkness captive. Yet let the ascension which could detract from the glory of his high triumph. So the setting of Christ in our faith hinges upon what follows His death and resurrection.

If Jesus had remained in Jerusalem, as His disciples hoped, the world from the four ends of Christendom would have congested the ports to greet that eye with denunciations to visit Jesus as judge, divider, benefactor, thereby weakening their faith and enervating their work in the world. The man who would have been a wart fibre in Christian manhood comes from largest faith and zeal in self-culture, and this could not be favorably produced everywhere with Jesus residing in Jerusalem. Everywhere should have equal divine assistance in having right hearts, speaking acceptable words, and doing justly. To this end Jesus must be spiritually present in the world and consequently bodily withdrawn. While the humanity of Jesus would have always diminished had He remained on earth, yet to reach His maximum effulgence it was expedient that He go away. Man's complete salvation and the glory of His great conquest in this departure. Our faith is vitally involved in His destination.

His departure. The farewell address of George Washington was important in his estimations as well as that of his soldiers and posterity. A farewell address would be desirable and fitting for all our presidents to close their administration. Our farewells are the utterances of our best selves. This is foreshadowed by its typical formula, "Fare ye well." "God be with you." "I am content to be 'Good-bye.'" The farewell of Jesus has the same relative importance. He takes leave of the world that clamored for His blood and had given over His soldiers. Mark you, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Thus His valedictory is in the same exalted level as all that precedes and our faith holds high in the risen and departed Christ.

He departs not in darkness but in the light of day; not in the valley but from Olivet's top; not alone but in the view of His disciples. He had withdrawn many times before, this time He ascends. "While He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven." Shortly after Stephen, the first martyr, looked up and said: "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man at the right hand of God." Some time after Paul had a vision of Jesus in heaven, likewise John. Satan the defiler, was hurled headlong from heaven. Nothing that defileth entereth therein. Elijah, a pattern of piety, whose mantle holy men coveted, the chariot of the Lord carried the prophet, and Enoch, who walked with God, was taken there. Jesus ascended to heaven, the abode of the good for all ages.

Furthermore, the whole company of prophets, seers, kings and mighty men of God, are in that great company whose number no man can number, yet Christ sits at the right hand with a name above every name and all powers and principalities at His feet. This exaltation—His through all time—enriches all His past, makes the land on which He lived to us only His presence precious and gives the largest satisfaction and fullest fruition to our faith.

The ascension of Christ pays honor to the body. The third article of our religion is "Christ did truly raise again from the dead and took again

His body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and there sitteth until He return to judge all men at the last day." Pestilences are not from Him. Disease, making the body, as Pope Innocentius III. said, "an instrument of nature," is no more from God than the disease of the soul. Jesus cured both and inflicted neither. The body designed to be an instrument of righteousness must be strong, to be strong it must be nourished by pure air, pure water, pure food. Even if these be secured by legislation, the legislation should compass the hygiene of homes, offices and factories, the prohibition both of overtaxation and of overwork, and the slaying of childhood upon Mammon's altar. The wounded are to be healed. More, the road between Jerusalem and Jericho so patrolled as to make wounds from robbers impossible. Not only is disease to be cured, but the cause is to be removed.

Christ's ascension confirms our hopes of immortality. We have a world of grief. First, the physical, from Adam. Like friends of his disciples, who have lived before us, we see how our bodies will dissolve into the dust. Our spiritual communion with God the Father, our passing from death to life in love for the brethren. This is our creation anew by the second Adam, Christ Jesus. As that which bore the image of the first Adam follows Him, so that in us which bore the image of the second Adam will follow Him.

If there were no continuation of this life after death, Christ says: "I would have told you so." No ravens concerning its terribleness—"I would have told you so." "I go to prepare a place for you; that where I am, there ye may be also." Christ's ascension describes our pathway beyond the grave, and where He is, all the spirits of just men made perfect will be also. The ascension of Christ gives most emphatic confirmation of our hope of the life beyond.

Joy from the ascension of Christ. These men had parted from their teacher, the prince among teachers, the friend of friends. His hands would no more be laid upon them in benediction. No more would His voice be heard. They saw the sufferings of the most irreparable loss. Thus bereft, their task was to discipline all nations composed of hostile peoples, eager to persecute them with death torture. Oh, the agony of the day! Yet they returned to Jerusalem with glad joy. Absorbed must have been their ascension joy to have absorbed their grief.

His words to them were "all power is given to me." Weakness would be annihilated by His omnipotent grace. The assurance of the fruit of your supreme desire gives great joy. The supreme desire of these who were trained by Him who is full of grace and truth would be the destruction of evil and the enthronement of good. The assurance of this consummation by Him of almighty power filled them with joy.

Joy comes from power. Government is said to have its origin in man's desire to govern rather than to be governed. The successful candidate flashed with power is joyful. All the power of our ancestors meets in us and must obey our best which may be "thus far." The Dark Ages said this and arrested progress. If further, which was of the twentieth century, the labor of the race are transmitted to the enrichment of posterity. These disciplines tense with the power of Him by which they can do all things, were joyful when they were given power that turns carnal kingdoms into those of eternal life. His intensity and duration is fullest. "This was the source of the disciples' joy. They continually praised and blessed God."

We may be the depository of the spiritual power of twenty Christian centuries. We may exercise it to make the world purer, juster, holier. The pathway of the ascended Christ may be the trial of our own spirits to ineffable glory. The redemption of these convictions as it is our privilege and duty to be, we experience with the disciples the great ascension joy and will like them "continually praise and bless God."

Broken Things. The flower that is crushed and broken off exhales the sweetest perfume. The shafts of sunlight broken reveal God's precious bow in the cloud. The little clinging tendrils are broken, but the branch yields richer fruit.

The precious alabaster box was broken, but Christ was saved. The threads of the loom are broken, that the pattern may be complete. They broken bits of glass in the hands of a master artist make a frail cathedral window.

Broken notes of music combine to make a perfect chord. The broken bread tells the Christian of a body broken for his sake. The broken words of a fraternal prayer brought blessing to those who heard.

What of the broken plans, the broken ambitions, the sufferings and losses and crosses of a broken life? In the hands of the Divine Artist they shall mean fragrant incense buds of promise, richer fruit, honor to the King of kings, a perfect pattern. "Unto them that are of a broken heart the Lord is nigh."

Spring of Power. God working mightily in the human heart in the spring of all abiding spiritual power; and it is only as men follow out the sublime promulgations of the inward spiritual life that they do great things for God.—David Livingstone.

Ptolemaic Astronomy. According to the Ptolemaic theory, the earth was the centre of the universe, and was motionless. The surrounding ethereal region was composed of eleven skies, or firmaments, which revolved around the earth as a common centre. All the celestial bodies moved around the earth. This system lasted for more than eleven hundred years, from about 300 B. C. to the time of Copernicus.

Monism. Monism is the doctrine of the oneness of all things. Mind and matter, God and the creation are one and the same thing. There is no supernatural. "All are but parts of one stupendous whole," the various phenomena being merely incidental to the great unity.

Daily Thought. Nor love thy life, nor hate, but what thou livest live well; how long or short permit to heaven.—Milton.

The Sunday-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON COMMENTS FOR JULY 26.

Subject: Saul Rejected by the Lord, 1 Samuel 15—Golden Text, Josh. 24:24—Commit Verse 22—Read Chapters 13, 14—Commentary.

TIME.—A. D. 1091 B. C. PLACE.—Gilead.

EXPOSITION.—1. Samuel Rebukes King Saul, 13:1-19. God had revealed His purpose to make Saul king first to Samuel, and to Samuel God first revealed His purpose to depose Saul because of his disobedience. There was no other man in all Israel whom God could so trust as Saul, and Samuel grieved greatly over Jehovah's rejection of Saul, he spent the whole night in tears and prayer (v. 11), but he rose early to perform the duty that God had put upon him, unwilling that he should be a hindrance to what he felt to be the will of God. As Saul greets Samuel with a great parade of piety, a guilty conscience often leads men to louder halloos. Saul uttered a bare-faced lie, but it is not likely that he intended to do it himself; that it was a lie. Many a man fancy that he is sincere when he says, "I have performed the commandment of the LORD," though in his inmost heart he knows that he has done nothing of the kind. 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