

# THE PULPIT.

AN ELOQUENT SUNDAY SERMON BY  
REV. DR. JOHN CURTIS AGER.

Theme: Tabernacle of God.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Sunday morning the Rev. Dr. John Curtis Ager, pastor emeritus of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian), new professor in Cambridge Theological School, preached in the pulpit which he filled for so many years. His subject was "The Tabernacle of God With Men." The text was Revelation 21:3: "And I heard a great voice out of the new heaven, saying, see, the tabernacle of God with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His people, and He, God with them, will be their God." Dr. Ager's sermon was a revelation of the new heaven, saying, see, the tabernacle of God with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His people, and He, God with them, will be their God.

The preceding verses, with the greater part of what follows in this chapter, are a description of what John saw coming down from God out of the new heaven. The remainder of the prophecy tells us what John heard out of the new heaven. John realizes this distinction when he says in the next chapter, "I John am he who saw and heard these things." This reflects an important spiritual distinction that is in some measure recognized in the common language of the world. Seeing a man in a purely intellectual act, and hearing implies also such a giving heed to the truth as calls for some response from the will. So in this prophetic vision the things John is said to have seen picture those aspects of the new truth now coming into the world that are spiritual in nature, while the things he heard represent those aspects of truth that appeal also to our emotions and volitions. The new heaven and the new earth, the holy city descending from the new heaven upon the new earth, complete in all its parts, with its foundations of precious stones, its streets of pure gold, and the whole city as transparent as the purest glass, and resplendent throughout with a divine light, for the Lamb was the light of it all, this is a divine symbol of the underlying truth which will illumine and fill and quicken all our intellectual faculties as fast and as fully as we are prepared to receive it. But the prophecy appealed both to John's sight and John's hearing to picture the important truth that is not a matter of intellectual hearing, and that cannot be made a new creature by any change, however great or radical, in his intelligence alone. The new truth has not done its work until it has touched the emotions and has quickened and excited the will to his own purposes and reformed the conduct and filled it with a new spirit. And this aspect of the truth is especially pictured in that part of the prophecy that John heard.

It is said out of the new heaven that he saw, John heard a great voice, which means a body of divine truth, a great volume of sound, such sound as would be fit expression of heavenly love. And this great voice said, "See, the tabernacle of God with men, and He will be tabernacled with them, and they will be His people, and He, God with them, will be their God." This pictures another aspect of the new truth that is now coming into the world. This truth is first pictured as a holy city to indicate how completely it would meet and satisfy all the intellectual needs of men, a perfect being for many of the things of heaven and peace. It is pictured as a bride attired for her marriage to teach that the requirements of this belief will not be satisfied until the life is brought into harmony and union with the belief. And now it is pictured as a temple, a building, a place where God will tabernacle Himself with men, to teach that this belief will furnish not only a most perfect spiritual abiding place for men, but also an abiding place for God with men.

To realize the full force of this symbol we need to recall that the tabernacle was under the Jewish dispensation. The Jewish dispensation, as we know, was a dispensation of types and symbols. Its sole function was to symbolize or picture the true church of the Lord or the true human life on the earth, and the true that representation in the world.

Thus its laws and ceremonies, as prescribed by the Lord, were simply a body of prophetic symbols. The tabernacle which was built at Mt. Sinai under divine direction was, in a sense, a picture of the true representative order. Until the temple took its place it was the center and seat of the entire Jewish system of worship, and for a time the center of each civil organization as the Jews possessed. In itself it was simply a temple, a building, a place where God would dwell, and in which the true human life, and as readily transported from place to place during their nomadic life. It was made after a pattern shown to Moses in heaven, and every detail of its construction was typical of heavenly things. And to the Jews, its people, it was the house of the Most High, the tent of the great unseen captain of the host, by whom all their movements were directed. His presence and His commands were made known by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, which moved forward to guide the host in its movements and rested where the host was to encamp. And both on the march and in camp this holy tent was at the center and was regarded with a reverence and awe it is impossible for us to realize. And whenever the host moved, the Lord needed Moses sought the will of the Lord in the tabernacle, as it had before been revealed to him in the mount, and the Lord talked with him there face to face. In this way the presence of the Lord was made manifest and the will of the Lord was made known to the Jewish people during all their forty years' life in the desert, and afterward with less fullness during the conquest of the promised land. And when at last a more permanent abiding place for the Lord was built, the ark was brought and placed in the holy of holies of the temple, this manifestation of the divine presence by the cloud "filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." And this wonderful cloud of glory, this symbol of the divine presence, called by the Jews the Shekinah, continued to rest upon the ark until the temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar and the ark was destroyed. But the tradition remained that when the Messiah came, and their government and worship were re-established, the Shekinah would be restored and the presence of the Lord with them again made manifest by this outward sign.

This hope and expectation of the Jews, in which doubtless the early Christians shared, it is necessary to recall to make clear the meaning and force of this prophecy. As under the Jewish dispensation God's actual presence with His people was made physically evident by this visible pillar of cloud and fire in connection with the tabernacle, and as those who followed this cloud and got from it immediate direction from God know themselves, by this visible symbol, to be His chosen people, so in these latter days, when a new Jerusalem would descend from God out of a new heaven, there would be given a new tabernacle of God with men, in which He would in a new and higher way tabernacle or dwell with them, and they would be His people, and He, God with them, would be their God.

Thus the old returns in the new. But it returns only as a type fulfilled, as a symbol realized. Between the old and the new there is the immeasurable difference between shadow and substance, between type and fulfillment. With the Jews God's presence in the tabernacle was only a typical presence. His revelation of Himself in the cloud was only a typical manifestation, they were His chosen people only in a typical sense, and He was God with them, only in a typical or representative way. And this brings us back to the same primary truths respecting the true life of man that the Divine Word everywhere reflects. The true life of man is not a product of human prudence and human ideals of goodness and human strivings after such goodness in which there is little if any reference to the Divine life. The true life of man is simply and solely the Divine life flowing into us and becoming active in us. This is the fundamental truth revealed in the incarnation, whereby God became tabernacled with men, and whereby as "Immanuel," God with us, He became our God. Thus in Jesus Christ this prophecy became potentially fulfilled. When God took upon Himself our nature and glorified it He became tabernacled in every minutest capacity and activity of that nature. In a fuller sense than man has ever known or ever can know did He then become God with us. But the dim perceptions of this truth that the apostles had, and which they obtained in the Christian Church in its real sense as the "God with men" become their God. To some He became a type or example of the possibilities of human nature, to others He became an infinite victim to expiate the infinite sinfulness of our race, but to those who have become a bringing down of the Divine life into such contact with fallen human nature as a whole as would restore that nature to its true order and its true relation to the Divine life, and thus into such contact with our individual life as to make the restoration of everyone's life to its true order and its true relation to the Divine life an easy task.

But in the now opened word this is the truth that is everywhere proclaimed, and that the Old Testament prefigures the New Testament declares fulfilled. To the Jews God made manifest His presence and revealed His will by physical signs, because they had no eyes to see His spiritual presence, no ears to hear His spiritual voice. But those who choose to be God's chosen people are able to see, in the light of spiritual truth shining into their opened spiritual intelligence, that these Jewish signs are actually fulfilled; to see in the Divine human life of Jesus Christ the tabernacle of God with men; to see that, by what the Lord did in His assumed human nature, the Divine life is in actual contact with every minutest movement of our life; to see that in every least issue between right and wrong, and every least issue between peace and war, the Lord is really with us, to help us and uphold us to the fullest extent that is good for us, and that, by simply bringing all our thinking and feeling into harmony with this truth, all the requirements of spiritual lifting will be made easy and its burdens light.

This simple truth, which makes clear to us the relation of the Divine life to our life, is the good tidings of great joy which the world is now beginning to hear. It says to us: "See in the Lord Jesus Christ the tabernacle of God with men, and being how He is the tabernacle of God with men, we have only to open our minds and hearts by the repudiation of evil and falsity and we will see in Him in reality His people, and He, God with us, will be their God, for His Divine human wisdom will then become our wisdom, His Divine human love our love, and His Divine human life our life.

And this truth is to come, not merely to our spiritual vision as a great light, but to our spiritual hearing as a truth heard, and heard as a great voice out of the new heaven, in that our affections as well as our thought will be moved and quickened by the limitless love that is revealed in that supreme truth. For when we spiritually hear this truth, we not only see but also feel that God is our Heavenly Father, yearning to make us veritably His children by making us consequently partakers of all the joys and delights that spring from that life. And no voice that ever entered human ear can compare with the fullness and sweetness of that voice when it is heard. It is the voice that saith: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

**Faithness.**  
Let us be open-minded and fair toward all men; let us judge them, but not prejudice them. Let us treat others as we would have them treat us.

**Golf in Turkey.**  
Probably few golfers are aware that the royal and ancient game has taken root in Turkey, and that a golf club has been in existence in Constantinople for the last five years. The club owes its origin to the members of the British Embassy and a few officials, and our Ambassador, the late Sir Nicholas O'Connor, was its first president. The members play over the historic Yok Maidan, or Arrow Plain, just outside Constantinople. The ground has been for centuries a playground for the Sultans and their suites, and many small marble pillars mark the distances of phenomenal shots with bow and arrow. It is perhaps appropriate that to the men of the long bow golfers should succeed, but it is to be hoped that they will get imitation of the Turks by erecting marble monuments in memory of their long drives.—London Globe.

**GOOD GUERS.**  
Bill—"I see the mines of a Montana town have a combined payroll of \$3,000,000 a year."  
Jill—"They must be Butte's then."  
—Yonkers Statesman.

# The Sunday School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON COMMITTEES FOR JANUARY 30.

Subject: Some Laws of the Kingdom, Matt. 5:17-26, 38-40.—Committee Verse 44.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48.

**TIME.**—Midsummer A. D. 28. **PLACE.**—Horns of Hattin. **EXPOSITION.**—The Law of the Kingdom Regarding Anger, 22-26. By the old law murder was forbidden (v. 21; cf. Ex. 20:13; Dent. 5:17); by the higher law of the Kingdom anger, which is ineluctable murder, is forbidden. Terms of contempt, whereby a brother's feelings are injured and his reputation endangered, are forbidden. Jesus teaches that there is a "hell of fire" (v. 10). If we have wronged another in the smallest matter so that he "hath angry against" us we should first be reconciled to him before we seek to bring an offering to God. The secret of many an unanswered prayer is that some brother has a just claim against us which we have not settled. One should not allow a just claim to remain unsatisfied a moment. He should at once seek to settle it, and if necessary quickly. "Have I angry against thee" does not mean, as so often interpreted, have a grudge or bitterness against thee, but have a just claim. We are not necessarily responsible for the grudge others hold against us, but we are responsible for the just claims. All just claims must be settled sooner or later.

**II. The Law of the Kingdom Regarding Injuries, 38-41.** The law of Moses required exact justice in the punishment of offences. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, was the law of Christ, the law of the Kingdom, which is not for the administration of public justice, but for the government of individual action, demands the most thoroughgoing forgiveness of injuries. Evil is not to be met with evil (cf. Luke 6:30-35). We should resist it, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 3:18-23). When one injury is done us, instead of resisting we should stand willing to receive another.

**III. The Law of the Kingdom Regarding Giving and Lending, 42.** The heart should be open in love toward all and the hand ever ready to give to the good and to the worthy, but to the unworthy, to the unfaithful and to the evil (cf. Luke 6:30-35). We should give to every one that asks of us (Luke 6:30). Should we take this literally? Yes, but note that it does not say that we should give to every one that asks the very thing that he asks. If a man will not work neither shall he eat (cf. Thess. 3:10). But while we may not give the very thing that is asked, we ought to give. Giving with unstinting hand, always giving, giving to all, is the law of the Kingdom. That most bothersome of men, the borrower, should receive the cold shoulder, but be heartily welcomed.

**IV. The Law of the Kingdom Regarding the Treatment of Enemies, 43-48.** Love should go out to all, not merely to friend and neighbor, but to the enemy as well. The man who does everything in his power to undermine us to blame our reputation, to curtail our influence, should be the object of our kindest consideration. When others curse us, we should bless them; when others hate us, we should do them good; when others persecute us, and despitefully use us, we should love them. The more people there are to persecute us, the more there are for whom we will have the privilege of praying. In this way persecution becomes a means of unalloyed blessing, a stepping stone on which we step higher into the life of Jesus Christ. He returns blessing to those who curse him, and he will take these words literally. He will have no more anxiety from persecutions and lies and slanders. By loving our enemies we shall ourselves be sons of God, for the son is like his father, and this is the way the heavenly Father receives his glory, and he returns blessing to those who curse him, and he will take these words literally. He will have no more anxiety from persecutions and lies and slanders. By loving our enemies we shall ourselves be sons of God, for the son is like his father, and this is the way the heavenly Father receives his glory, and he returns blessing to those who curse him, and he will take these words literally. He will have no more anxiety from persecutions and lies and slanders. By loving our enemies we shall ourselves be sons of God, for the son is like his father, and this is the way the heavenly Father receives his glory, and he returns blessing to those who curse him, and he will take these words literally. He will have no more anxiety from persecutions and lies and slanders. 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