

Devotional Service

BY REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

JULY 17.—"WHO SAY YE THAT I AM?"

Matt. 16, 13-30; Mal. 3, 16.

One of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith is the divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ was God manifest in the flesh. Many men, some of them scholars, are willing to admit that Jesus was a good and great man, the model man of the centuries. But there they stop. They will not endorse the Bible doctrine that Jesus was "the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." They pause in the dim twilight, while the splendid sunburst of revelation is just a little space ahead. No Methodist can take such a position. Our theology declares that Jesus Christ is "the Son of God, the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father—very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men." (See Discipline, Articles of Religion, No. 2.)

DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

1. He is called God.

So that there may be no doubt about this great doctrine, the Bible declares that Jesus Christ is God; he is called God in John 1, 1, and in Rom. 9, 5. Jesus is the Word of the Father, the expression of God's thought to the world. But he is more than an expression of thought; he is God himself expressing his own thought. He is "over all, God blessed for ever." Christ is God. If we wish to know what God is, we must seek to know what Christ is. How can we fully know God otherwise, for Christ is God manifest in humanity—in such life and form that mortals can know, understand, believe and love.

2. Christ possesses the attributes of God.

(a) He has the attribute of self-existence, as shown in John 1, 4, and John 5, 26.

(b) He has the attribute of eternity. John 1, 1; John 8, 58.

(c) He has the attribute of immutability. Heb. 13, 8.

(d) He has the attributes of omnipresence, Matt. 28, 20; of omniscience, John 2, 24; John 16, 30; of omnipotence, Matt. 28, 18. Having these attributes of deity possessed and manifested, what other can Christ be but God. A being is what its attributes declare it to be. Christ's attributes declare him to be God. He therefore is God.

3. The works of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ.

In John 1, 3, and in 1 Cor. 8, 6, the works of creation are ascribed to Christ. What does this mean? In Genesis, the opening words are, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And the opening words of the Gospel by John are, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him." It is God in Genesis that created the world; it is the Word in John that made all things. There is but one inference. One and the same person is referred to—God is the Word, and the Word is God. But Christ is the Word, therefore Christ is God.

4. Jesus Christ receives the honor and worship due to God. A number of passages of Scripture prove this. For example, it is declared in John 5, 23; Heb. 1, 6; Phil. 2, 10, 11. When we read that "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father," and that "all the angels of God should bow, that every

tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," we realize that Christ is more than man. It would be idolatry to make actual the contents of these passages unless Christ were divine, for the first commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Christ and God are one, else worship could not be offered to the Son.

Besides all this, there is the argument from Christian experience. The penitent soul is satisfied with nothing less than Christ. He recalls the words of Jesus, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," and the words of the Acts, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He pleads no merit, but says:

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

Christ alone can satisfy the soul seeking salvation. It is so also to the mature believer. "Christ is all and in all," is the sum and substance of his creed. Christ's spirit he seeks to possess; Christ's example he endeavors to imitate; Christ's truth he strives to know; Christ's attitude towards men he desires to emulate; Christ's kingdom he labors to advance; and when the end comes, he longs to depart and be with Christ, which is far better Christian experience proves the divinity of Christ.

AN ILLUSTRATION.

Two unbelievers once called on an old member of the Society of Friends to ask what was his opinion of the person of Christ. The Quaker replied, "The Apostle says, we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, because they expected a temporal Messiah; to the Greeks foolishness, because he was crucified as a malefactor, but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Now," continued the godly Quaker, "if you can separate the power of God from God, and the wisdom of God from God, I will come over to your opinion." It was a complete answer.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Here is a study in the divinity of Christ. You may be aware the Unitarian Church denies this essential doctrine of Christianity. As young Methodists we should know the immovable arguments on which the doctrine is based, as well as a knowledge of it in actual experience. You will find in the foregoing exposition the leading proofs from the Bible itself. You might divide the interest by selecting six members a week in advance, each to present a three-minute talk on one of the proofs. Then use the blackboard exercises to impress the entire study. Have prayer that the greatest of all proofs of Christ's divinity may be possessed by all—the proof from personal knowledge and experience.

JULY 24.—"THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION."

Matt. 17, 1-8; 2 Pet. 1, 17, 18.

The scene of the transfiguration was in all probability on Mount Hermon. Modern scholarship fixes it there. This mountain lies on the north-west border of Palestine. It towers high above the ancient border city of Dan, and is the most conspicuous and beautiful mountain in the land. In our recent visit to the Holy Land, we observed that wherever we went this magnificent snow-capped pyramid looked down upon us like an omnipresent deity. At the present day it is called Jebel Shleikh, the Chief Mountain; and Jebel eth-Thelji snowy mountain. When the whole country is parched with the summer sun, white lines of snow streak the head of Hermon. It was the great landmark of

the Israelites, being associated with their northern border as the sea was with their western border. The height of Hermon is reckoned at over 9,000 feet above the level of the sea. Other mountains may be famous, the Alps, the Rockies, the Himalayas, for beauty, rugged grandeur, and lofty elevation; but Hermon is forever renowned for a scene precious and memorable to the Christian mind in all ages, the transfiguration of Christ.

OBJECTS OF THE WONDER.

A miraculous occurrence like this must have had sublime objects in view. So it had and here they are:

1. The disciples were encouraged. Jesus before this had given his disciples glimpses of his sufferings and death, which had startled and shocked their faith, and disappointed their hopes. Now, he gives them a view of his coming glory. They now see the crown beyond the cross. The veil is parted and they behold the glorious realities on which the future of the Messiah and his work are founded.

2. The faith of the disciples was strengthened. Hitherto they had seen Jesus only in human form, with the flashes of divinity which shone through his miraculous works and heavenly words. Now they see his real nature, his interest and essential divinity blazing out through the serge and sackcloth of his humanity. Henceforth their faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, will remain unshaken, and they can bear witness to what they know and have seen.

3. The disciples would understand the reason of the death on the cross. The conversation, the subject of which was the death by the cross, would enable the disciples to see the importance and necessity of Christ's sacrifice and departure. The atonement was the great event of the world's history; this was the real founding of the Kingdom of God, and the beginning of those glorious times which the prophets had foretold.

4. It showed the disciples the real harmony of the old and new dispensations. They would now understand how the Gospel was the fulfilment of Moses and the prophets; how loyalty and faithfulness to the Law would constitute their whole duty; and how the church is essentially one through all the past ages, and for all time to come. How this revelation would strengthen these men for the declaration of the truth in after years, preparing them to face persecution and death for what they knew was true as demonstrated on the slopes of Hermon.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

For present-day Christians this mountain scene has its thrilling lessons. And what are they?

1. We are reminded that seclusion is needed for the highest sort of devotion. Jesus and his disciples hid in the wilderness from the busy world to the mountain slopes for special communion with God. In this bustling age the quiet hour of meditation and the secret hour of devotion are greatly needed to prepare the Christian for faithful service for God and humanity.

2. We learn that the devotional spirit sees new glory in Christ and his Word. When Peter and his companions retired apart with Christ, they saw what they had never seen before—Christ was transfigured before them and Moses and Elijah shared his brightness. This new revelation came to the disciples in the quiet hour of devotion. So when we give ourselves to the devotional study of the Scriptures, or retire in a calm hour to commune with God, new radiance and strong help break forth upon the soul.

3. We are taught that devotion is not the whole of life. Peter wanted to re-