

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

IMAGERY OF THE APOCALYPSE INTERESTED.

The Foundations and the Twelve Wonderful Stones—Ancient Superstitions About the Amethyst—And This is But the Outside of Heaven.

The Wall of Heaven.

Dr. Talmage's subject was "The Wall of Heaven," and his text, Revelation xxi, 12, "The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones."

Shall I be frank and tell you what are my designs on you to-day? They are to make you homesick for Heaven; to console you concerning your departed Christian friends by giving you some idea of the brilliancy of the scenes in which they now commingle; to give all who love the Lord a more elevated idea as to where they are going to pass the most of the years of their existence, and to set all the indifferent and neglected to quick and immediate preparation, that they may have it likewise.

Yes, it is to induce many of our young people to study the volume of God that few ever open, but without some acquaintance with which it is impossible to understand the Bible—I mean the precious stones, their crystallization, their powers of refraction, their cleavage, their fracture, their luster, their phosphorescence, their transparency, their finity of color and shape, and what they had to do with the welfare and dooms of families and the destiny of nations—aye, the positive revelation they make of God himself.

My text stands us in the presence of the most stupendous splendor of the universe, and that is the wall of Heaven, and says of its foundations that they are garnished with all manner of precious stones. All the ancient cities had walls for safety, and Heaven has a wall for everlasting safety. You may say that a wall made up of all manner of precious stones is impulsive, but you cannot understand the form and significance of the figure unless you know something about the real structure and color and value of the precious stones mentioned.

Now, I propose this morning, so far as the Lord will help me, to attempt to climb not the wall of Heaven, but the foundations of the wall, and I ask you to join me in the attempt to scale some of the heights. We shall only get part of the way up, but better than that to stay down on the stupid level where the most of us have all our lives been standing. We shall clear down at the bottom and where the wall begins.

The Jasper Wall.

The first layer of the foundation, reaching all around the city and for 1,500 miles, is a layer of jasper. Indeed there is a layer of jasper in the wall of Heaven than of any other brilliant, because it not only comprises a part of the foundation, but makes up the chief part of the superstructure. The Jasper is a conglomeration of many colors. It is brown; it is yellow; it is green; it is vermilion; it is red; it is purple; it is black; and is so striped with colors that much of it is called ribbon jasper.

It is found in Siberia and Egypt, but it is rare in most lands and of great value, for it is so hard the ordinary processes cannot break it off from the places where it has been deposited. The workmen bore holes into the rock of Jasper, then drove into these holes sticks of dry birch wood, and then saturate the sticks and keep them saturated until they swell enough to split the rock, and the fragments are brought out and polished and transported and cut into cameos and put behind the glass doors of museums.

The portraits of Roman Emperors were cut into it. The finest intaglio ever seen is in the Vatican Museum, the head of Minerva in jasper.

By divine arrangement jasper adorned the breastplate of the high priest in the ancient temple. But its most significant position is where it glows and burns and darkens and brightens and preaches from the lowest stratum of the wall of Heaven. Glad am I that the very first row of stones in the wall of Heaven is Jasper of many colors, and if you like purple it is purple, and if you like brown it is brown, and if you like ochre yellow it is ochre yellow, and if you like vermilion it is vermilion, and if you like black it is black. It suggests to me that Heaven is a place of all colors—colors of opinion, colors of creed, colors of skin, colors of taste.

The Blue Sapphire.

But we must pass up in this inspection of the foundations of the great wall of Heaven, and after leaving the jasper the next precious stone reached is sapphire, and it sweeps around the earth 1,500 miles. All lapidaries agree in saying that the sapphire of the Bible is what we now call lapis lazuli. Job speaks with emotion of "The place of sapphires," and God thought much of this precious stone that he put it in the breastplate of the high priest, commanding, "The second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond."

The sapphire is a blue, but varies from faintest hue to deepest ultramarine. It is found a pebble in the rivers of Ceylon. It is elsewhere in compact masses. Persia and Thibet and Burma and New South Wales and North Carolina yield exquisite specimens. Its blue eye is seen in the valley of the Rhine. After a burial of thousands of years it has been brought to sight in Egyptian monuments and Assyrian cylinders.

At Moscow and St. Petersburg and Constantinople I have seen great masses of this sapphire, commonly called lapis lazuli. The closer you study its veins the more enchanting, and I do not wonder that the sapphire is called into the foundation of the wall of Heaven. It makes a strong stone for the foundation, for it is the hardest of all minerals except the diamond.

Sapphire based on jasper, a blue sky over a fiery sunset. St. John points to it in Revelation and says, "The second sapphire," and this suggests to me that through our earth and all its furniture of mountains and seas and atmospheres are to collapse and vanish in some way kept all eternity in some way kept the most beautiful of earthly appearances, whether you take this sapphire of the second layer as literal or figurative.

The deep blue of our skies and the deep blue of our seas must not, will not, be forgotten. If a thousand years after the world has gone to ashes you or I want to recall how the earthly skies looked in a summer noon or the midocean in a calm, we will have only to look at the second row of the foundation of the wall of Heaven.

Oh, I am so glad that St. John told us about it! "The second sapphire." While we are living in sight of that wall spirits who have come from other worlds and who have never seen our earth will visit us, and we will visit them, and sometimes we will be in converse about this earth when it was yet abroad and awing, and we shall want to tell them about how it looked at such times, and then it will be a great object lesson for all eternity, and we will say to our visitor from some other world, as we point toward the wall of Heaven, "It looked like that sira-

tion of foundation next to the lowest." John, twenty-first chapter and nineteenth verse, "The second sapphire."

Chalcedony and Emerald. A step higher and you come to chalcedony, another layer in the foundation of the wall and running 1,500 miles around the Heavenly city. Chalcedony Translucent. A divine mixture of agates

and opals and cornelian. Striped with white and gray. Dashed of pallor blushing into red and darkening into purple. Iceland and the Hebrides hold forth beautiful specimens of chalcedony.

But now we must make a swift ascent to the top of the foundation wall, for we cannot minutely examine all the layers, and so, putting one foot on the chalcedony of which we have been speaking we spring to the emerald, and we are one-third of the way to the top of the foundation, for the fourth row is emerald. That, I would judge, is God's favorite among gems, because it holds what seems evident is his favorite color on earth, the green, since that is the color most widely diffused across all the earth's continents—the grass, the foliage, the everyday dress of nature. The emerald Kings used it as a seal to stamp pronouncements. The rainbow around the throne of God is by St. John compared to it.

Conquerors have considered it the greatest prize to capture. What ruthlessness when the soldiers of Pizarro powdered it with their hammar! Emperors have had much to do with the destiny of Mexico. Five of them were presented by Cortez to his bride, one of them cut into the shape of a rose, another into the shape of a trumpet, another into the shape of a belt, with tongue of pearl, and this presentation aroused the jealousy of the throne and caused the consequent downfall of Cortez. But the depths of the sea were decorated with those emeralds, for in a shipwreck they went down off the coast of Barbary. Napoleon was an emerald at Austerlitz.

In the Kremlin museum at Moscow there are crowns and scepters and outspread miracles of emerald. Ireland is called the Emerald Isle not because of its verdure, but because it was presented to Henry II of England with an emerald ring. Nero had a magnifying glass of emerald through which he looked at the gladiatorial contests at Rome. But here are 1,500 miles of emerald sweeping around the Heavenly city in one layer. Sardonyx and Sardius.

But upward still and you put your foot on a stratum of sardonyx, white and red, a seeming commingling of snow and fire, the snow cooling the fire, the fire melting the snow.

Another climb and you reach the sardius, named after the city of Sardis. Another climb and you reach the chrysolite. A specimen of this, belonging to Epiphanius, in the fourth century, was said to be so brilliant that whatever was put over to conceal it was thrown through, and the Emperor of China has a specimen that is described as having such penetrating radiance that it makes the night as bright as the day.

A higher climb and you reach the beryl. Two thousand years ago the Greeks used this precious stone for engraving purposes. It was accounted among the royal treasures of Tyre. The hilt of Murat's sword was adorned with it. It glows in the imperial crown of Great Britain. Luther thought the beryl of the heavenly wall was turquoise. Kalisch thought it was chrysolite. Josephus thought it a golden colored jewel. The wheels of Ezekiel's vision flamed with beryl and were a revolving fire.

The beryl appears in six sided prisms, and is set in seals and intaglios, in necklaces and coronets. It was the joy of ancient jewels. It ornamented the affluent with eardrops. Charlemagne presented it to his favorites. Beautiful beryl. Exquisitely shaped beryl! Divine colored beryl! It seems like colored glass.

But stop not here. Climb higher and you come to topaz, a bewilderment of beauty and named after an island of the Red Sea.

Climb higher and you come to chrysoprase, of greenish golden hue and hard as flint.

Climb higher and you reach the jacinth, named after the flower hyacinth and of reddish blue.

The Table of the Amethyst.

Take one more step and you reach the top, not of the wall, but the top of the foundations of the wall, and St. John cries out, "The twelfth an amethyst!" This precious stone when found in Australia or India or Europe stands in columns or pyramids. For color it is a violet blooming in stone. For its play of light, for its deep mystery of color, for its uses in Egyptian, in Birsukan, in Roman art it has been honored. The Greeks thought this stone a preventive of drunkenness. The Hebrews thought it a source of pleasant dreams.

For all lovers of gems it is a subject of admiration and suggestiveness. Yes, the word amethyst means a prevention of drunkenness. Long before the New Testament made reference to the amethyst in the wall of Heaven the Persians thought that cups made out of amethyst would hinder any kind of liquor contained therein from becoming intoxicating. But of all the amethystine cups from which the ancients drank not one had any result of protection.

For thousands of years the world has been looking in vain for such a preventive amethystine cup. Staggering Noah could not find it. Convivial Asaphus driving Yashit from the gates could not find it. Nahal, breaking the heart of beautiful Abigail could not find it. Belshazzar, the kingly reveler, on the night that the Chaldeans took Babylon could not find it. Not one of the millions of inebriates whose skulls pave the continents and pave the depths of the sea could find it. There is no such cup. Strong drink from hollowed amethystine intumesce like a strong drink from a power mug. It is not the style of cup we drink out of, but that which the cup contains, which decides the helpful or damning result of the beverage.

All around the world last night and to-day, out of cups costlier than amethyst, men and women have been drinking their own doom and the doom of their children for this life and the next. Ah, it is the amethystine cups that do the wildest and worst slaughter! The smash of the blithy goblets of the rummeries would long ago have taken place by law, but the amethystine chalices prevent—the chalices out of which legislatures and Congresses drink before and after they make the laws. Amethystine chalices have been the friends of intoxication instead of its foes. Over the fiery lips of the amethystine chalices is thrust the tongue of that which biteth like a serpent and stin eth like an adder.

The Hebrew Superstition.

But standing upon the top of this amethystine layer of the foundation of the wall of Heaven I bethink myself of the mistake that many of the ancient Hebrews made when they thought that the amethyst was a producer of pleasant dreams. Just wear a piece of amethyst over your heart or put it under your pillow, and you would have your dreams filled with everything beautiful and entrancing. No, no. The style of pillow will not decide the character of the dream. The only recipe for pleasant dreams is to do right and think right when you are wide awake. Conditions of physical disease may give a good man nightmares, but a man physically well, if he behave himself aright, will not be troubled with such dreams.

Nebuchadnezzar, with eagle's down under his head and Tyrian purple over it, struggled with a bad dream that made him sick out for the soothsayers and astrologers to come and interpret it. Pharaoh and the marble palaces of Memphis, was confounded by a dream in which he could not catch the fat-cows and the small ears of corn devoured the seven large ears, and awful famine was proffered. Pilate's wife, amid clouds of richest upholstery, had a startling dream because of which she sent a mes-

sage to hot haste to a court room to keep her husband from enacting a judicial outrage. But Jacob, at Bethel, with a pillow of mountain rock, had a blissful dream of the ladder angel blossoming.

Bedford, with his head on a hard plank of Bedford jail, saw the gates of the celestial city, St. John, in the barren island of the Aegean Sea, in his dream heard trumpets and saw cavalrymen on white horses and a new Heaven and a new earth. No amount of rough pillow can disturb the night vision of a saint, and no amount of amethystine can delectate the dream of a miser.

But, some one will say, why have you not minutely examined all the layers, and so, putting one foot on the chalcedony of which we have been speaking we spring to the emerald, and we are one-third of the way to the top of the foundation, for the fourth row is emerald. That, I would judge, is God's favorite among gems, because it holds what seems evident is his favorite color on earth, the green, since that is the color most widely diffused across all the earth's continents—the grass, the foliage, the everyday dress of nature. The emerald Kings used it as a seal to stamp pronouncements.

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