

Timnath-Serah, or the City of the Sun

by A.B. Simpson

The city of the sun is a place of delightful happiness, abundant and glorious grace, Christ's manifested presence, light and guidance, quickening life and power, warmth and love, Divine Healing, and cloudless and unbroken communion with God.

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Matthew 5:14, John 15:11, Philippians 4:19

Topics: "Divine Presence", "Spiritual Joy"

Description

A.B. Simpson explores the significance of Timnath-Serah, the city of the sun, as a metaphor for the highest possibilities in the Christian life. He emphasizes that Joshua, a selfless leader, received this inheritance as a gift from his people, symbolizing the joy, grace, and presence of Christ available to believers. The sermon highlights the importance of dwelling in this city, which represents spiritual joy, divine healing, and unbroken communion with God. Simpson encourages believers to build their lives in this city by opening themselves to God's light and love, and to actively seek their inheritance through prayer and faith. Ultimately, he calls for a life filled with the warmth and power of Christ, leading to a vibrant and fulfilling Christian experience.

Transcript

"When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua, the son of Nun, among them; according to the Word of the Lord, they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath-Serah in Mount Ephraim; and he built the city, and dwelt therein." (Josh. 19: 49, 50.)

This was the last of the special inheritances in the Land of Promise. Joshua, the unselfish leader, left his own inheritance until the last, and even then it was his people who gave to him his portion, and he accepted it only when they pressed it upon him. It is no wonder that it was the highest and best of all the choice possessions of the land.

Its name is suggestive of its value and significance. Timnath-Serah in Mount Ephraim means the city of the sun, and it speaks to us of the highest and best possibilities of our own Christian life.

SPIRITUAL JOY

1. The city of the sun is a place of delightful happiness, for the sun is the type of the Lord Himself, our Light and our Salvation, and "in His presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your Countenance, in Your name shall they rejoice all the day, and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted."

The figure speaks of gladness and sunshine. Are we living there?

There is no better way for us to glorify Him than to be happy in Him, and "rejoice before Him all our days." This will be a witness to the world that they cannot resist, and it will give a strength and energy to our own life and service which cannot be exaggerated.

Oh! you downcast souls, you children of anxious care and gloom, come up into the city of the sun and dwell in the light of the Lord! There is a heaven below in which victorious souls may dwell before they reach the heaven above.

GLORIOUS GRACE

2. The city of the sun is a place of abundant and glorious grace, for "the Lord God is a Sun and Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly."

Its inhabitants have the immunities and privileges of heavenly citizens, and dwell continually in the presence of their King, and all the riches of His grace are their free inheritance.

He gives them not only His grace, but His glory, and withholds from them no good thing. They have His resources for all their undertakings, and out of His fulness do they receive even grace for grace.

Beloved, are we dwelling in this city of the sun? Have we received this abundance of grace, and are we reigning in the light and joy of Jesus Christ? Can you say with a glad and rejoicing heart, "My God shall supply all my need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus," and "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever"?

CHRIST'S PRESENCE

3. The city of the sun is the place of Christ's manifested presence. In the fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus said to His disciples, "He that has My Commandments and keeps them is he that loves Me, and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him."

This word "manifest" in the original involves the figure of the brightest sunlight, and it literally means the outshining of the sun, and expresses the glory of Christ's inward revelation of Himself to the trusting and obedient heart. Brighter than the noonday sun, more real than the effulgence of the orb of day, is the light with which Christ makes Himself known, oftentimes, in the inner sanctuary of the consecrated soul.

It was foreshadowed in the Shekinah glory, that lit up, in ancient times, the Holy of Holies and hovered above the mercy-seat. Speaking of it, the Apostle says: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The Holy Spirit is spoken of as "shedding abroad," or shining abroad, the love of God in our hearts. Do you know the vision of His glorious face? Have you seen Him in the revelation of His inward glory, "whose

countenance is as the sun shining in his strength," and of whom you can truly say, "He is the chief among ten thousand, yes, He is altogether lovely"?

DIVINE LIGHT

4. The city of the sun is a place of light and guidance. For again the Master has said: "I am the light of the world; he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The light of life is the light that shines upon our daily life.

There is a place where we may walk continually in the light of the Lord, and receive habitually the guidance that will guard us from serious error, and keep us in the light of God. There is a way of coming to God occasionally for direction in great crises, and then doing the best you can on ordinary occasions. But it is possible to have our whole life so possessed by the Holy Ghost that our very thoughts and intuitions will come to us in quietness and simplicity, with the consciousness that they have been touched by His thought and illumined by His light, that we are walking continually with our Father, and receiving constantly the testimony that we please God.

This is a very beautiful freedom which He has promised to the meek and consecrated spirit. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with My eye." "Your ear shall hear a word behind you saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand or to the left."

Beloved, are you dwelling in this city of light, walking continually under his directing eye, and with the consciousness of being in His blessed light?

LIFE AND POWER

5. The city of the sun is a place of quickening life and power. The sun is the source of life and force. As it ascends the higher meridian of spring and summer, how the pulses of nature revive, until every tree and plant is throbbing with new vitality, and all the forces of nature are stimulated and vivified! How easily yonder sun holds this world and all the train of planets and satellites in their circling orbits, without a quiver of restlessness or a flutter of decaying strength! How mighty the force of gravitation that sweeps from yonder ball of fire and holds the solar system in harmonious activity!

Christ is our Sun and Source of life and power, and as we dwell in His presence we are quickened into resurrection life and animated with His own almighty power. The joy of the Lord is our strength, and they who dwell above the clouds and mists of earth's lower planes know "the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe," and are used by His Spirit as the instruments and vessels of His mighty plans.

Are we dwelling in this city of life and working in His All-Sufficiency?

LOVE

6. The city of the sun is a place of warmth and love. It is a summer clime, where the frosts and chills of selfishness and bitterness never come, where the warm atmosphere of God's everlasting love melts every ice bond, dissolves the wintry chains, and brings all hearts into the family relationships of the heavenly world, and we are "one, even as the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father," and, fitly framed together, the whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

We cannot know anything about love unless we dwell in God and God in us. All true love must come from Him, and as we live in the light of His presence and the warm atmosphere of His fellowship; we shall love even as He loves, and we shall reflect on others the radiance which is shining in our hearts from His.

DIVINE HEALING

7. The city of the sun is a place of Divine Healing.

Let us listen again to His own words: "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings, and you shall go forth and grow like calves of the stall."

In the natural world sunlight is essential to health, and darkness and shadow create a congenial atmosphere of disease. Good light and pure air are agencies of health.

Still more is the life and joy of the Lord essential to spiritual healthfulness. The light of Christ is the true source of physical strength and the joy of the Lord is the best of all medicines. The inflowing and indwelling of the Holy Ghost brings quickening strength to every fiber of our being. If you would rise above the depressing influence of climate, contagion and natural infirmity, build your house in Timnath-Serah, and dwell continually in the loving presence and cloudless communion of the Holy Ghost.

COMMUNION

8. The city of the sun is a place of cloudless and unbroken communion.

There is a place in Northern Europe which they call "The Land of the Midnight Sun." There, as the months pass by, the sun completes his circle above the horizon, and it is one continual, cloudless day.

There is such a land in our higher inheritance of grace. There is a promise which we may prove and claim even in this life. "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be your everlasting light and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

There are human friendships, especially those that are very intimate, whose exquisite delight is this, that they have never been clouded, and that these friends could not ever imagine the shadow of a cloud passing over them. The very thought that you could be alienated from your friend would at once place that friendship on a different plane and make it common. It is its exquisite prerogative that you cannot even conceive of its being clouded by a doubt or a breach of confidence.

And there is a friendship with Christ so exquisite and true that it not only has no severance or interruption, but we cannot even conceive of any breach or suspension. In its very nature, the love is everlasting, infinite, unconditional, and capable of no separation. He has given to us His eternal oath: "I have sworn that I will never be angry with you, nor rebuke you." And you would as soon think of blaspheming Him to His face as of even imagining the shadow of a doubt of His perfect and everlasting love.

Beloved, have you come into this high place of unclouded light and love? Have you tasted the exquisiteness of that communion which you know will never be interrupted? It is for you. This is the city "where they go no more out, and where they have no need of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and the Lamb is the Light thereof."

HOW DO WE GET TO THIS CITY?

1. We get there through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator. There are two sides to a mountain. If you attempt to ascend you will be hurled from dizzy heights and slippery places to awful chasms, or wrapped in veils of impenetrable mist, through which you cannot find your way. But there is another way, up a gentle incline, where a pathway has been prepared, and you can safely reach the loftiest heights.

And so there is a way by which we cannot find God -- the way of mere research, human wisdom or moral righteousness. In vain have the ages sought to find the seat of His gracious presence, and gaze upon His countenance in light and life. It is like ascending Sinai through the thick darkness and the angry fire.

But there is a way which Jesus has prepared and of which He says: "I am the Way; no man comes unto the Father but by Me. No man has seen God at any time, but the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Not only was He in the bosom of the Father but He is in the bosom, and when we come into His bosom we are in the Father's bosom too. It is like the ascent of the ancient Mount, when Moses took the elders of Israel up to meet God, and they carried in their hands the atoning blood; and as they went up into that glorious Presence-Chamber, we are told with exceeding beauty, "They did eat and drink, and they saw God, and there was under His feet, as it were, the paved work of a sapphire stone, and, as it were, the body of heaven in His clearness."

This is the way to Timnath-Serah. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is His face, let us draw near"; and we shall find ourselves in the city of the sun.

2. Let us build there. Joshua not only chose Timnath-Serah, but he ascended to the mountain-height, and he built the city. Now there are a good many ways to build a city, especially with reference to the sun. We can build so as to shut out all the warmth, or we can turn its face toward the sunshine and open all the windows to the light. Some people seem to be constituted so as to catch every shadow and cloud that comes, and some seem to focalize every ray of sunshine at their own door.

Were I building a city of the sun, I should make all the gates of praise and the walls salvation. The houses should be of transparent glass, that the sun might shine through them every day, and the outlook for every window should be toward the sun-rising.

There is a story of an Oriental king who worshiped the sun, and he wanted to build a temple to him. He sent for three architects and asked each to give him a model of the temple. After many days they returned to submit their models. The first prepared a temple of stone, beautifully carved. The king admired it and called for the second. His was of pure gold, and the walls were polished and burnished until they reflected the sun from every side. The king was delighted with it, and the architect thought he had won the prize. But the third brought his little model, and, lo! it was all of glass, so that the sun could come in every side and fill it spontaneously with his light and glory. "Ah," said the king, "this is the true temple of the sun; this is his own fitting shrine, letting him into every chamber, and having no glory but his own perfect light."

Beloved, shall we be such temples of the Sun of Righteousness, open to Him in every avenue of our being, and filled in the inmost part with His glorious light and presence? He will come wherever there is an opening to receive Him.

3. But Joshua not only built there but dwelt there. He did not visit Timnath-Serah occasionally to get mountain views from the sunlit hills, but he made it his abiding home.

Are we dwelling in Timnath-Serah? Are we abiding in the light and love of God? Have we come to that settled place where "the sun no more goes down, and the Lord becomes our everlasting light?"

And now there are two more words that tell us how we may obtain this blessed portion.

The first is, Joshua received this inheritance "according to the commandment of the Lord." God provided it for him in His Word and so He has provided it for each of us. It is not only God's promise, but His command for us, that we shall rise to the fulness of His blessing. "Let us, therefore, fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

But there is another word. We are told that Joshua also asked it. God gave it and Joshua asked it; and we shall receive what we ask for, and take.

There are many things in the commands of God for you, which are missing by simple default. "You have not because you ask not." How sorry you would be if you found, after spending a lifetime of poverty and toil, a will had been left by a friend providing you with affluence and wealth, and you had simply neglected to prove it and claim it!

Your bountiful Father has left you a city of glory and joy. Do not let it be lost through your default, but claim your inheritance, enter upon it, build it and occupy it, and you, too, shall be able to sing,

"I am dwelling on the mountains,
Where the golden sunlight gleams,
O'er a land whose wondrous beauty
Far exceeds my fondest dreams;
Where the air is pure, ethereal,
Laden with the breath of flowers,
They are blooming by the fountains,
'Neath the amaranthine bowers.
"Is not this the Land of Beulah,
Blessed, blessed Land of Light,
Where the flowers bloom forever
And the Sun is always bright ?"

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