

Rev. J. J. Read A Memorial

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Rev. John Jeremiah Read, son of Wm. and Maria Dotson Read, was born in Hinds County, Miss., Jan. 13, 1843. His grandfather, John Read, was one of the pioneers of Mississippi, going thither when quite a young man, from near Nashville, Tenn. His mother's father, Jeremiah Dotson, was a Virginian of Scotch-Irish Descent, whose wife was a Miss Tully, of Winchester, Va. Removing to Nashville he engaged in business there for some years, going thence to Vicksburg, Miss.

Mr. Read's father died when he was only seven years of age and he spent most of his boyhood days on his grandfather's plantation, attending a fine academy, where he was grounded in the rudiments of an English education. From there at fifteen he entered business at Raymond, Miss., spending three years in a store.

He entered the Confederate States Army at the age of eighteen years and spent nearly four years in that arduous service. His taste for literature and educational pursuits led him to choose the work of a professional teacher as his goal, and with this in view he taught to gain means to secure a college course.

Under God and the influence of his pastor Rev. I. J. Daniel, he was convinced of his duty to enter the ministry. After a course in Oakland College, the Presbyterian college of Mississippi in that day, he entered the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S.C., being then past twenty five years of age.

He left the Seminary in May, 1871, entering upon work at Port Gibson, Miss.

A call unanimously given by the First Church of Houston, Texas, having been placed in his hands by the Presbytery of Brazos, was accepted. He was ordained and installed as pastor of that church by the Presbytery of Brazos, Dec. 10, 1871. On

April 28, 1874, he married Miss Lillah, daughter of Rev. Abner A. and Mrs. Porter.

He labored very successfully in the Houston church until 1876. At that time, being advised by his physicians to seek a more northern climate on account of his health, he accepted a call from the Foreign Mission Committee to take charge of Spencer Academy in the Indian Territory. Having traveled in a wagon from Paris, Texas, through sleet and snow, he arrived at his field December 25, 1876. He entered upon his laborious duties as principal of Spencer Academy, caring for the mental, moral, physical and spiritual welfare of sixty boys who were provided for by the Choctaw Nation. Mr. Read himself was supported by the Committee. Heavy responsibilities and a vast amount of hard work were devolved upon him, but he saw the fruit of his work then and in later years in the good which appeared in the lives of many pupils.

When his contract expired at Spencer Academy, Presbytery assigned him work in the Chickasaw Nation. Selecting as a central point a place twenty-five miles north-west of Caddo railroad station, he immediately erected the mission home, and began his evangelistic work among the Chickasaws in August, 1881, having one organized church with numerous outlying stations. His first sermon was preached under the shade of a large elm tree, for there was not a single church in the bounds of his work. In the summer, meetings were held under arbors, and in the winter in log school houses and in private houses.

In 1884, Jonas Wolf, a Chickasaw elder, having been ordained, at Brother Read's request the Chickasaw churches were put under his care. In the meantime the membership had increased, and two large, comfortable churches had been erected by a Chickasaw elder, Booker James.

After turning over this portion of his work to Bro. Wolf, he began to reach out to the regions beyond, obeying literally the command, "Go ... preach the Gospel." Building upon no man's foundation, he soon had the work in a prosperous condition, having organized churches at Button Spring, Double Spring, Bethel and Colbert, with large commodious, comfortable church buildings at

the three former places; and at the latter place plans are on foot for the erection of a neat church.

In addition to these four churches to which he ministered regularly until the day of his death, he had upon his heart and mind the spiritual welfare of the youth of the Chickasaw Nation. He preached regularly to two hundred of these gathered in the national academy, and also to many others scattered over the country in the neighborhood schools. The Lord gave him the joy of reaping some of the fruit from the seed sown, but the half will not be known until the great day of the Lord, when all the sheaves shall have been gathered into his garner.

For several years past his dominant thought seemed to be the words often upon his lips, The time is short. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work." He seemed impelled by a burning desire to preach, to proclaim the glad news of salvation. His life was spent "in journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, ... in perils by the heathen, ... in perils in the wilderness, ... in weariness and painfulness," in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in faintings often, in cold and in heat, in rain and in snow.

To meet these hardships, he had been blessed with a superior mind, and this was most thoroughly trained. What he studied, he mastered. The knowledge gained was clear, and became a lasting part of his mental possessions. He was a thorough student of the word of God; it was his one book, and a volume of large print was often taken upon the seat of his buggy -- his companion as he traveled. He sought for the truths of that word, and aimed to give them out to others as he tried to guide his own life in accordance with them.

As a theologian, he had very few superiors among his brethren in the ministry. He preached the word in season and out of season, whenever and wherever opportunity offered. In his pastoral work he was indefatigable, stopping at every home by the wayside, however humble or poor, where there was a chance to say a word for his Lord and for the poor of his fallen men. He carefully looked

out for opportunity to sow seed in the hearts of children. For nearly fourteen years he was stated clerk of Indian Presbytery, missing only two regular meetings on account of sickness. He often traveled, preached and attended Presbytery when he would have been justified if he had been in bed on account of his health. He was necessarily much absent from home and without such accommodations as many men would regard as a necessity for one suffering as he often did.

We have not space to tell of his wide influence, but letters of sympathy have reached his family from all parties -- teachers of schools, public men, his old pupils at Spencer; from officers and members of his Church, from brethren in the States who had known and loved him in early and late years -- all going to show that they regarded him as a man who was devoted to his Master's work, and as one who had grown steadily in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A furlough of one month being granted him by the Committee of Home Missions (last winter), he visited the scene of his early years in Mississippi, preaching and presenting the Home Mission work of the Territory of Vicksburg, Port Gibson, Jackson, Canton, Wesson, Edwards, Bolton, Hazelhurst, Crystal Springs and other points in Mississippi. Placing his youngest daughter in school at Crystal Springs, Miss., and bidding his daughter and friends good-bye, he returned to the Territory, and preached on Sabbath, Jan. 23, at Colbert, and then passed on to his mission home, four miles from Wahpanaki. Here he remained three days, when he set out to preach on Sabbath, January 30, at Double Spring, and to go thence to an important meeting of the trustees of Austin College, of which he was a member, representing Indian Presbytery. This involved a trip of perhaps fifty miles in his buggy. Arriving at Kale, where he expected to preach on Sabbath eve, he had a chill which prevented him. However, on Monday he continued his journey. Stopping at Sherman on business, his physicians forbade his going further. His cold soon developed into pneumonia. On February 4, 1898, he fell asleep in Jesus, rested from his arduous labors on earth, and entered into

"the rest that remaineth for the people of God." His remains were carried to the Button Springs church, where the sad and solemn services were conducted on Sabbath, Feb. 6, by Rev. W. J. B. Lloyd, Rev. Dr. John S. Moore and Rev. C.J. Ralston. Mr. Lloyd preached from Rev. 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The red, the white and the black man were represented, some coming thirty and forty miles to express their affection and their sorrow. There on that Sabbath eve, in the radiant glow of the setting sun, he laid his body by those of his two children in the little cemetery of the mission home.

Thus ended a life of great consecration, of great labor, self-denial and usefulness. But he will live again in the resurrected body, fashioned like unto the glorified body of Him whose he was and whom he served. A widow and six children are left to mourn the loss of an honored husband and a kind father.

The Presbytery of Indian, in placing the above memorial upon its records, desires to render its thanks to our God for the life and labor of our departed brother, and as we realize that our own days on earth are being rapidly numbered with the past, we ask for grace to enable us to faithfully finish the work which the Master has given us to do.

We wish also to place upon record an expression of our sympathy with the Chickasaw, the Choctaw and the white people of the Indian Territory, in this their loss, especially to offer our sympathy to the bereaved widow and the children of our departed brother and co-laborer, and to ask for them the richest blessings of God in all temporal and spiritual things.

W. J. B. Lloyd, J. M. Franklin, and C. E. Hotchkin,
Committee.