

Jefferson Davis Tant

From the Restoration Movement Website

Jefferson Davis Tant was born June 28, 1861, at Cartersville, Georgia. His parents were William and Mattie (Lloyd) Tant. At the age of 14, Tant joined the Methodist Church. At the age of 15 he moved with his parents from Georgia to Texas. About this time, he became interested in an education and, fortunately, he lived near a high school.

Unfortunately, he had only one dollar to supply all of his earthly needs. He invested his dollar in three yards of cloth from which his mother made him a pair of pants. He started to school without a single school book and one pair of pants. At school, he would dodge around the children and study his lessons on their books with them, until one day a schoolmate cursed him and told him if his old daddy could not get him some books that he had better quit. Discouraged, he told his troubles to his teacher, who agreed that he would leave one window unfastened each night so his pupil could come and get the books for his lesson the next day, learn his lessons, and put the books back next morning before school. This he did for two years, and many times three o'clock in the morning found him after his lessons with a little brass lamp to study by.

Jefferson Davis Tant was in the school room each day but never looked at a book, yet at time for recitation he seldom failed to answer all the questions. The children begged him to tell them how he knew his lessons without studying. This he kept as a profound secret. The news spread that he was an "idiot" and people often visited the school to see "Old man Tant's 'idiot' son that learned his lessons without studying." After two years, a lady learned of his desire for an education and loaned him \$20 to buy his books. The last two years he was in school, he was in a class alone. He had passed all the other students, not because he had more ability but because he used what he had.

The Reverend Jefferson Davis Tant, duly ordained in the Methodist ministry, became a circuit-rider in North Texas in the year 1880. His work as a Methodist minister was destined to be a short one. In 1881, he moved to Buda, Texas, where in August of that year, he heard W. H. D. Carrington, a minister of the Church of Christ, preach the gospel. He liked what he learned. In those days, the church was often referred to as "Campbellites." The meeting ran from two weeks to a month. Tant decided to go back and hear what the "Campbellite" preacher had to say further. Carrington took the Bible, read the passages and explained them clearly, especially the verses that told what one must do to be a Christian or to be saved.

On August 14, 1881, Tant came forward in Carrington's meeting and gave the preacher his hand. He was openly weeping as he did so, weeping not from fear, but from gratitude. Since he had been immersed, he was received into the fellowship of the Buda church on his statement that he was "satisfied" with his baptism. It was only one week later that young Jefferson Davis Tant received a written statement from the Buda Church of Christ, commending him to the brotherhood to preach the gospel of Christ and baptize any that he was instrumental in converting to Christ. The statement was signed by two elders and two preachers.

1883 was a milestone in Tant's life. It was then that he received his very first compensation as a preacher of God's word. He checked his records and found that he received \$9.75 for the year. \$5.00 of this amount came from performing a wedding ceremony.

J. D. Tant married Laura Warren on March 26, 1890, at Georgetown, Texas. E. Hansborough performed the ceremony. To this union, two children were born: Ira, a son who lived to be 10 years old, and Davis, a daughter.

— continued on page 371004

Editor's Note: We publish this history to help brethren appreciate a notable gospel preacher and to show what a privilege a good education can be.

371003