



Dr. R. M. Gilbert Dies in New York While on Vacation

The body of the Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert, who died in New York Thursday, will arrive in Savannah tomorrow for funeral services.

Dr. Gilbert died of a heart attack while on vacation in New York.

The body will be accompanied back to Savannah by his wife, Mrs. Elorie S. Gilbert, who was with him at the time of his death. Dr. Gilbert, pastor for 16 years of the First African Baptist Church, went to New York earlier this month and Saturday Mrs. Gilbert left to join him there for their vacation. When she arrived she found Dr. Gilbert had been stricken ill and was in a hospital.

Funeral arrangements, in charge of the Sidney A. Jones Funeral Home, have not been made, but services will be held next week, possibly on Tuesday.

Besides his wife, Dr. Gilbert is survived by two sons, R. M. Gilbert, Jr., of South Bend, Ind., and William Henry Gilbert of Savannah, and three daughters, Mrs. Geneviene R. Reynolds of New York city, and Miss Ruth A. Gilbert and Miss Juanita J. Gilbert, both of Savannah.

One of the outstanding Negro Baptist ministers of the country, Dr. Gilbert came to Savannah 16 years ago to become pastor of the First African Baptist Church and only last month there was a three-day service at the church marking the anniversary of his pastorate. Several local churches joined in the celebration.

Aside from his pastoral work, Dr. Gilbert was the author of several dramas dealing with the nativity of Christ. On several occasions these were presented to capacity houses at the Municipal Auditorium, with Dr. Gilbert taking the part of the Christus. Among his plays were the Negroic passion play concept, entitled, "Passion and Triumph" and "Pontius Pilate." The plays were presented in other cities also. Dr. Gilbert was trained in the drama and was said to have been the nation's leading Negro in the field in religious drama.

Dr. Gilbert was active in civic work. He had served as head of the Negro divisions for the Red Cross and Chatham-Savannah Tuberculosis Association campaigns, conducted the first campaign for the Greenbriar Children's Center which he was instrumental in organizing, led the first Negro Y.M.C.A. campaign. He was organizer of the Savannah branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and he had served as an officer of the Citizens Democratic Club. He was a member of the mayor's advisory committee on Negro affairs during the administration of Mayor John G. Kennedy.

PASTOR DIES—The Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert, pastor of the First African Baptist Church, who died in New York Thursday while on vacation. Funeral services will be held here.