

# **The Final Judgment**

or

## **The World Judged Righteously by Jesus Christ**

A Sermon by Jonathan Edwards

ACTS xvii. 31. Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

These words are a part of the speech which Paul made in Marshell, a place of concourse of the judges and learned men of Athens. Athens was the principal city of that part of Greece which was formerly a commonwealth by itself, and was the most noted place in the whole world for learning, philosophy, and human wisdom; and it continued so for many ages; till at length the Romans having conquered Greece, its renown from that time began to diminish; and Rome having borrowed learning of it, began to rival it in science, and in the polite and civil arts. However, it was still very famous in the days of Christ and the apostles, and was a place of concourse for wise and learned men.

Therefore, when Paul came thither, and began to preach concerning Jesus Christ, a man who had lately been crucified at Jerusalem, (as in the 18th verse,) the philosophers thronged about him, to hear what he had to say. The strangeness of his doctrine excited their curiosity; for they spent their time in endeavouring to find out new things, and valued themselves greatly upon their being the authors of new discoveries, as we are informed in ver. 21. They despised his doctrine in their hearts, and esteemed it very ridiculous, calling the apostle a babbler; for the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Greeks foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. yet the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, two different sects, had a mind to hear what the babbler had to say.

Upon this Paul rises up in the midst of them, and makes a speech; and as he speaks to philosophers and men of learning, he speaks quite differently from his common mode of address.

There is evidently, in his discourse, a greater depth of thought, more philosophical reasoning, and a more elevated style, than are to be found in his ordinary discourses to common men. His speech is such as was likely to draw the attention and gain the assent of philosophers. He shows himself to be no babbler, but a man who could offer such reason, as they, however they valued themselves upon their wisdom, were not able to gainsay. His practice here is agreeable to what he saith of himself, 1 Cor. ix. 22. "that he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some."

He not only to the weak became as weak, that he might gain the weak; but to the wise he became as wise, that he might gain the wise.

In the first place, he reasons with them concerning their worship of idols. He declares to them the true God, and points out how unreasonable it is to suppose, that he delights in such superstitious worship. He begins with this, because they were most likely to hearken to it, as being so evidently agreeable to the natural light of human reason, and also agreeable to what some of their own poets and philosophers had said, (ver. 28.) He begins not immediately to tell them about Jesus Christ, his dying for sinners, and his resurrection from the dead; but first draws their attention with that to which they were more likely to hearken; and then, having thus introduced himself, he proceeds to speak concerning Jesus Christ.

He tells them, the times of this ignorance concerning the true God, in which they had hitherto been, God winked at; he suffered the world to lie in heathenish darkness; but now the appointed time was come, when he expected *men should everywhere repent;*" because he had appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained."

As an enforcement to the duty of turning to God from their ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, the apostle brings in this, that God had appointed such a day of judgment. And as a proof of this, he brings the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Concerning the words of the text, we may observe, that in them the apostle speaks of the general judgment: *He will judge the World.*—the time when this shall be, on the appointed day: *He hath appointed a day.*—How the world is to be judged: *In righteousness.*—The man by whom it is to be judged: *Christ Jesus whom God raised from the dead.*

## Doctrine

There is a day coming, in which there will be a general righteous judgment of the whole world, by Jesus Christ.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall show, That God is the Supreme Judge of the world. That there is a time coming, when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world. That the person by whom he will judge it is Jesus Christ. That the transactions of that day will be greatly interesting and truly awful. That all shall be done in righteousness. And finally, I shall take notice of those things which shall be immediately consequent upon the judgment.

## Sect. I

God is the supreme judge of the world.

1. God is so by *right*. He is by right the supreme and absolute ruler and disposer of all things, both in the natural and moral world. The rational understanding part of the creation is indeed subject to a different sort of government from that to which irrational creatures are subject. God governs the sun, moon, and stars; he governs even the motes of dust which fly in the air. Not a hair of our heads falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. God also governs the brute creatures; by his providence, he orders, according to his own decrees, all events concerning those creatures. And rational creatures are subject to the same sort of government; all their actions, and all events relating to them, being ordered by superior providence, according to absolute decrees; so that no event that relates to them ever happens without the disposal of God, according to his own decrees.

The rule of this government is God's wise decree, and nothing else.

But rational creatures, because they are intelligent and voluntary agents, are the subjects of another kind of government. They are so only with respect to those of their actions, in which they are *causes by counsel*, or with respect to their voluntary actions. The government of which I now speak is called *moral* government, and consists in two things, in giving laws, and in judging.

God is, with respect to this sort of government, by right the sovereign *ruler* of the world. He is possessed of this rightly by reason of his infinite greatness and excellency, by which he merits, and is perfectly and solely fit for, the office of supreme ruler. He that is so excellent as to be infinitely worthy of the highest respect of the creature, hath thereby a right to that respect; he deserves it by a merit of condignity; so that it is injustice to deny it to him. And he that is perfectly wise and true, and is only so regarded, hath a right in everything to be regarded, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God hath also a right to the character of supreme ruler, by reason of the absolute dependence of every creature on him. All creatures and rational creatures no less than others, are wholly derived from him, and every moment are wholly dependent upon him for being, and for all good: so that they are properly his possession. And as, by virtue of this, he hath a right to give his creatures whatever rules of conduct he pleases, or whatever rules are agreeable to his own wisdom; so the mind and will of the creature ought to be entirely conformed to the nature and will of the Creator, and to the rules he gives, that are expressive of it.

For the same reason, he hath a right to *judge* their actions and conduct, and to fulfil the sanction of his law. He who hath an absolute and independent right to give laws, hath evermore the same right to judge those to whom the laws are given. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a judge of reasonable creatures; and sanctions, or rewards and punishments, annexed to rules of conduct, are necessary to the being of laws.

A person may instruct another without sanctions, but not give laws. However, these sanctions themselves are vain, are as good as none, without a judge to determine the execution of them. As God hath a right to be judge, so hath he a right to be the *supreme* judge; and none hath a right to reverse his judgments, to receive appeals from him, or to say to him, Why judgest thou thus?

2. God is, *in fact*, the supreme judge of the world. He hath power sufficient to vindicate his own right. As he hath a right which cannot be disputed, so he hath power which cannot be controlled.

He is possessed of omnipotence, wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world; and he doth maintain his dominion in the moral as well as the natural world. Men may refuse

subjection to God as a lawgiver; they may shake off the yoke of his laws by rebellion; yet they cannot withdraw themselves from his judgment. Although they will not have God for their lawgiver, yet they shall have him for their judge. The strongest of creatures can do nothing to control God, or to avoid him while acting in his judicial capacity. He is able to bring them to his judgment-seat, and is also able to execute the sentence which he shall pronounce.

There was once a notable attempt made by opposition of power entirely to shake off the yoke of the moral government of God, both as lawgiver, and as judge. This attempt was made by the angels, the most mighty of creatures; but they miserably failed in it: God notwithstanding acted as their judge in casting those proud spirits out of heaven, and binding them in chains of darkness unto a further judgment, and a further execution. "God is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job ix. 4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever hath acted as judge in bestowing what rewards, and inflicting what punishments, he pleased on the children of men. And so he doth still; he is daily fulfilling the promises and threatenings of the law, in disposing of the souls of the children of men, and so he evermore will act.

God acteth as judge towards the children of men more especially,

(1.) In man's particular judgment at death. Then the sentence is executed, and the reward bestowed *in part*; which is not done without a judgment. The soul, when it departs from the body, appears before God to be disposed of by him, according to his law. But by this appearing before God, to be judged at death, we need understand no more than this, that the soul is made immediately sensible of the presence of God, God manifesting himself immediately to the soul, with the glory and majesty of a judge; that the sins of the wicked, and the righteousness of the saints, are brought by God to the view of their consciences, so that they know the reason of the sentence given, and their consciences are made to testify to the justice of it; and that thus the will of God for the fulfilment of the law, in their reward or punishment, is made known to them and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

(2.) In the great and general judgment, when all men shall together appear before the judgment-seat to be judged: and which judgment will be much more solemn, and the

sanctions of the law will go a further degree be fulfilled.—But this brings me to another branch of the subject.

## Sect. II

That there is a time coming when God will, in the most public and solemn manner, judge the whole world of mankind.

The doctrine of a general judgment is not sufficiently discoverable by the light of nature. Indeed some of the heathens had some obscure notions concerning a future judgment. But the light of nature, or mere unassisted reason, was not sufficient to instruct the world of fallen men in this doctrine. It is one of the peculiar Doctrine of revelation, a doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There were indeed some hints of it in the Old Testament, as in Psal. xcvi. 13. The Lord cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and his people with his truth.” And Eccl. xii. 14. “For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” And in some other such like passages. But this doctrine is with abundantly the greatest clearness revealed in the New Testament: there we have it frequently and particularly declared and described with its circumstances.

However, although it be a doctrine of revelation, and be brought to light by the gospel, the brightest and most glorious revelation that God hath given to the world; yet it is a doctrine which is entirely agreeable to reason, and of which reason gives great confirmation. That there will be a time before the dissolution of the world, when the inhabitants of it shall stand before God, and give an account of their conduct; and that God will in a public manner, by a general and just judgment, set all things to rights respecting their moral behaviour, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason; which I shall now endeavour to make appear. But I would premise that what we would inquire into, is not whether all mankind shall be judged by God; for that is a thing that the light of nature clearly teaches, and we have already spoken something of it: but whether it be rational to think that there will be a *public* judgment of all mankind *together*. This I think will appear very rational from the following considerations.

1. Such a judgment will be a more glorious display of God's majesty and dominion; it will be more glorious, because it will be more open, public, and solemn. Although God now actually exercises the most sovereign dominion over the earth; although he reigns and doth all things according to his own will, ordering all events as seemeth to himself good; and although he is actually judge in the earth, continually disposing of men's souls according to their works; yet he rules after a more hidden and secret manner, insomuch that it is common among the proud sons of men to refuse acknowledging his dominion. Wicked men question the very existence of a God, who taketh care of the world, who ordereth the affairs of it, and judgeth in it; and therefore they cast off the fear of him. Many of the kings and great men of the earth do not suitably acknowledge the God who is above them, but seem to look upon themselves as supreme, and therefore tyrannize over mankind, as if they were in no wise accountable for their conduct. There have been, and now are, many atheistically persons, who acknowledge not God's moral dominion over mankind; and therefore they throw off the yoke of his laws and government. And how great a part of the world is there now, and has there always been, that has not acknowledged that the government of the world belongs to the God of Israel, or to the God of Christians; but has paid homage to other imaginary deities, as though they were their sovereign lords and supreme judges. Over how great a part of the world hath Satan usurped the dominion, and set up himself for God, in opposition to the true God!

Now, how agreeable to reason is it, that God, in the winding up of things, when the present state of mankind shall come to a conclusion, should in the most open and public manner, manifest his dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, by bringing them all, high and low, rich and poor, kings and subjects, together before him to be judged with respect to all that they ever did in the world! that he should thus openly discover his dominion in this world, where his authority hath been so much questioned, denied, and proudly opposed! That those very persons, who have thus denied and opposed the authority of God, should be themselves, with the rest of the world, brought before the tribunal of God! That however God be not now visibly present upon earth, disposing and judging in that visible manner that earthly kings do; yet at the conclusion of the world he should make his dominion visible to all, and with respect to all mankind, so that every eye shall see him, and even they who have denied him shall find, that God is supreme Lord of them, and of the whole world!

2. The end of judgment will be more fully answered by a public and general, than only by a particular and private, judgment. The end for which there is any judgment at all is to display and glorify the righteousness of God; which end is more fully accomplished by calling men to an account, bringing their actions to the trial, and determining their slate according to them, the whole world, both angels and men, being present to behold, than if the same things should be done in a more private way. At the day of judgment there will be the most glorious display of the justice of God that ever was made. Then God will appear to be entirely righteous towards every one; the justice of all his moral government will on that day be at once discovered. Then all objections will be removed; the conscience of every man shall be satisfied; the blasphemies of the ungodly will be for ever put to silence, and argument will be given for the saints and angels to praise God for ever: Rev. xix. 1, 2. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power be to the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments.”

3. It is very agreeable to reason, that the irregularities which are so open and manifest in the world, should, when the world comes to an end, be publicly rectified by the supreme governor. The infinitely wise God, who made this world to be a habitation for men, and placed mankind to dwell here, and hath appointed man his end and work, must take care of the order and good government of the world, which he hath thus made. He is not regardless how things proceed here on earth: it would be a reproach to his wisdom, and to the perfect rectitude of his nature, to suppose so. This world is a world of confusion; it hath been filled with irregularity and confusion ever since the fall; and the irregularities of it are not only private, relating to the actions of particular persons; but states, kingdoms, nations, churches, cities, and all societies of men in all ages, have been full of public irregularities. The affairs of the world, so far as they are in the hands of men, are carried on in the most irregular and confused manner.

Though justice sometimes takes place, yet how often do injustice, cruelty, and oppression prevail! How often are the righteous condemned, and the wicked acquitted and rewarded! How common is it for the virtuous and pious to be depressed, and the wicked to be advanced! How many thousands of the best men have suffered intolerable cruelties, merely for their virtue and piety, and in this world have had no help, no refuge to fly to! The world

is very much ruled by the pride, covetousness, and passions of men. Solomon takes much notice of such like irregularities in the present state, (in his book of Ecclesiastes,) whereby he shows the vanity of the world.

Now, how reasonable is it to suppose, that God, when he shall come and put an end to the present state of mankind, will in an open, public manner, the whole world being present, rectify all these disorders! and that he will bring all things to a trial by a general judgment, in order that those who have been oppressed may be delivered; that the righteous cause may be pleaded and vindicated, and wickedness, which has been approved, honoured, and rewarded, may receive its due disgrace and punishment; that the proceedings of kings and earthly judges may be inquired into by him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire; and that the public actions of men may be publicly examined and recompensed according to their desert! How agreeable is it to divine wisdom thus to order things, and how worthy of the supreme governor of the world!

4. By a public and general judgment, God more fully accomplishes the reward he designs for the godly, and the punishment he designs for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his saints, is the honour which he intends to bestow upon them. He will honour them in the most public and open manner, before the angels, before all mankind, and before them that hated them. And it is most suitable that it should be so: it is suitable that those holy, humble souls, that have been hated by wicked men, have been cruelly treated and put to shame by them, and who have been haughtily domineered over, should be openly acquitted, commended, and crowned, before all the world.

So one part of the punishment of the ungodly will be the open shame and disgrace which they shall suffer. Although many of them have proudly lifted up their heads in this world, have had a very high thought of themselves, and have obtained outward honour among men; yet God will put them to open shame, by showing all their wickedness and moral filthiness before the whole assembly of angels and men; by manifesting his abhorrence of them, in placing them upon his left hand, among devils and foul spirits; and by turning them away into the most loathsome, as well as most dreadful, pit of hell, to dwell there for ever.—Which ends may be much more fully accomplished in a general, than in a particular judgment.

### Sect. III

The world will be judged by Jesus Christ.

The person by whom God will judge the world, is Jesus Christ, God-man. The second person in the Trinity, that same person of whom we read in our Bibles, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Galilee and Judea, and was at last crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, will come to judge the world both in his divine and human nature, in the same human body that was crucified, and rose again, and ascended up into heaven: Acts i. 11. "This same Jesus that is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." It will be his human nature which will then be seen by the bodily eyes of men. However, his divine nature, which is united to the human, will then also be present: and it will be by the wisdom of that divine nature that Christ will see and judge.

Here naturally arises an inquiry, Why is Christ appointed to judge the world rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost? We cannot pretend to know all the reasons of the divine dispensations.

God is not obliged to give us an account of them. But so much may we learn by divine revelation, as to discover marvellous wisdom in what he determines and orders with respect to this matter. We learn,

1. That God seeth fit, that he who is in the *human nature*, should be the judge of those who are of the human nature: John v. 27. "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." Seeing there is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God chooses, in all his transactions with mankind, to transact by him. He did so of old, in his discoveries of himself to the patriarchs, in giving the law, in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and in the manifestations he made of himself in the tabernacle and temple: when, although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet he was so in design, it was ordained and agreed in the covenant of redemption, that he should become incarnate. And since the incarnation of Christ, God governs both the church and the world by Christ. So he will also at the end *judge* the world by him. All men shall be judged by God, and yet at the same time by one invested with their own nature.

God seeth fit, that those who have bodies, as all mankind will have at the Day of Judgment, should see their judge with their bodily eyes, and hear him with their bodily ears. If one of

the other persons of the Trinity had been appointed to be judge, there must have been some extraordinary outward appearance made on purpose to be a token of the divine presence, as it was of old, before Christ was incarnate. But now there is no necessity of that: now one of the persons of the Trinity is actually incarnate, so that God by him may appear to bodily eyes without any miraculous visionary appearance.

2. Christ hath this honour of being the judge of the world given him, as a *suitable reward* for his sufferings. This is a part of Christ's exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is given him in reward for his humiliation and sufferings. This was stipulated in the covenant of redemption; and we are expressly told, it was given him in reward for his sufferings, Phil. ii. 8-12. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God seeth meet, that he who appeared in such a low estate amongst mankind, without form or comeliness, having his divine glory veiled, should appear amongst men a second time, in his own proper majesty and glory, without a veil; to the end that those who saw him here at the first, as a poor, frail man, not having where to lay his head, subject to much hardship and affliction, may see him the second time in power and great glory, invested with the glory and dignity of the absolute Lord of heaven and earth; and that he who once tabernacled with men, and was despised and rejected of them, may have the honour of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with respect to their eternal state! John v. 21-24.

God seeth meet that he who was once arraigned before the judgment-seat of men, and was there most vilely treated, being mocked, spitted upon, and condemned, and who was at last crucified, should be rewarded, by having those very persons brought to his tribunal, that they may see him in glory, and be confounded; and that he may have the disposal of them for all eternity; as Christ said to the high priest while arraigned before him, Matt. xxvi. 64. "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

3. It is needful that Christ should be the judge of the world, in order that he may *finish* the work of redemption. It is the will of God, that he who is the redeemer of the world should be a *complete* redeemer; and that therefore he should have the whole work of redemption left in his hands. Now, the redemption of fallen man consists not merely in the impetration of redemption, by obeying the divine law. and making atonement for sinners, or in preparing the way for their salvation, but it consists in a great measure, and is actually fulfilled, in converting sinners to the knowledge and love of the truth, in carrying them on in the way of grace and true holiness through life, and in finally raising their bodies to life, in glorifying them, in pronouncing the blessed sentence upon them, in crowning them with honour and glory in the sight of men and angels, and in completing and perfecting their reward. Now, it is necessary that Christ should do this, in order to his finishing the work which he hath begun. Raising the saints from the dead, judging them, and fulfilling the sentence, is part of their salvation; and therefore it was necessary that Christ should be appointed judge of the world, in order that he might *finish* his work. (John vi. 30, 40. chap. v. 25-31.) The redemption of the bodies of the saints is part of the work of redemption; the resurrection to life is called a redemption of their bodies, (Rom. viii 23.)

It is the will of God, that Christ himself should have the fulfilling of that for which he died, and for which he suffered so much. Now, the end for which he suffered and died was the complete salvation of his people; and this shall be obtained at the last judgment, and not before. Therefore it was necessary that Christ be appointed judge, in order that he himself might fully accomplish the end for which he had both suffered and died. When Christ had finished his appointed sufferings, God did, as it were, put the purchased inheritance into his hands, to be kept for believers, and be bestowed upon them at the day of judgment.

4. It was proper that he who is appointed king of the church should rule till he should have put all his enemies under his feet; in order to which, he must be the judge of his *enemies*, as well as of his people. One of the offices of Christ, as redeemer, is that of a king; he is appointed king of the church, and head over all things to the church; and in order that his kingdom be complete, and the design of his reign be accomplished, he must *conquer* all his enemies, and then he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father: 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he

hath put all enemies under his feet.” Now, when Christ shall have brought his enemies, who had denied, opposed, and rebelled against him, to his judgment seat, and shall have passed and executed sentence upon them, this will be a final and complete *victory* over them, a victory which shall put an end to the war. And it is proper that he who at present reigns, and is carrying on the war against those who are of the opposite kingdom, should have the honour of obtaining the victory, and finishing the war.

5. It is for the abundant *comfort of the saints* that Christ is appointed to be their judge. The covenant of grace, with all its circumstances, and all those events to which it hath relation, is every way so contrived of God, as to give strong consolation to believers: for God designed the gospel for a glorious manifestation of his grace to them; and therefore everything in it is so ordered, as to manifest the most grace and mercy.

Now, it is for the abundant consolation of the saints, that their own Redeemer is appointed to be their judge; that the same person who spilled his blood for them hath the determination of their state left with him; so that they need not doubt but that they shall have what he was at so much cost to procure.

What matter of joy to them will it be at the last day, to lift up their eyes, and behold the person in whom they have trusted for salvation, to whom they have fled for refuge, upon whom they have built as their foundation for eternity, and whose voice they have often heard, inviting them to himself for protection and safety, coming to judge them.

6. That Christ is appointed to be the judge of the world, will be for the more abundant *conviction of the ungodly*. It will be for their conviction, that they are judged and condemned by that very person whom they have rejected, by whom they might have been saved, who shed his blood to give them an *opportunity* to be saved, who was wont to offer his righteousness to them, when they were in their state of trial, and who many a time called and invited them to come to him, that they might be saved. How justly will they be condemned by him whose salvation they have rejected, whose blood they have despised, whose many calls they have refused, and whom they have pierced by their sins!

How much will it be for their conviction, when they shall hear the sentence of condemnation pronounced, to reflect with themselves, how often hath this same person, who now passes sentence of condemnation upon me, called me, in his word, and by his

messengers, to accept of him, and to give myself to him! How often hath he knocked at the door of my heart! and had it not been for my own folly and obstinacy, how might I have had him for my *Saviour*, who is now my incensed *Judge*!

#### **Sect. IV**

Christ's coming, the resurrection, the judgment prepared, the books opened, the sentence pronounced and executed.

1. Christ Jesus will, in a most magnificent manner, descend from heaven with all the holy angels. The man Christ Jesus is now in the heaven of heavens, or, as the apostle expresses it, *far above all heavens*, Eph. iv. 10. And there he hath been ever since his ascension, being there enthroned in glory, in the midst of millions of angels and blessed spirits. But when the time appointed for the day of judgment shall have come, notice of it will be given in those happy regions, and Christ will descend to the earth, attended with all those heavenly hosts, in a most solemn, awful, and glorious manner. Christ will come with divine majesty, he will come in the glory of the Father, Matt. xvi. 27. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels."

We can now conceive but little of the holy and awful magnificence in which Christ will appear, as he shall come in the clouds of heaven, or of the glory of his retinue. How mean and despicable, in comparison with it, is the most splendid appearance that earthly princes can make! A glorious visible light will shine round about him, and the earth, with all nature, will tremble at his presence.

How vast and innumerable will that host be which will appear with him! Heaven will be for the time deserted of its inhabitants.

We may argue the glory of Christ's appearance, from his appearance at other times. When he appeared in transfiguration, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

The apostle Peter long after spake of this appearance in magnificent terms, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory." And his appearance to

St. Paul at his conversion, and to St. John, as related in Rev. i. 13,. &c. were very grand and magnificent. But we may conclude, that his appearance at the Day of Judgment will be vastly more so than either of these, as the occasion will be so much greater. We have good reason to think, that our nature, in the present frail state, could not bear the appearance of the majesty in which he will then be seen.

We may argue the glory of his appearance, from the appearances of some of the angels to men; as of the angel that appeared at Christ's sepulchre, after his resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 3. "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." The angels will doubtless all of them make as glorious an appearance at the Day of Judgment, as ever any of them have made on former occasions. How glorious, then, will be the retinue of Christ, made up of so many thousands of such angels! and how much more glorious will Christ, the judge himself, appear, than those his attendants! Doubtless their God will appear immensely more glorious than they.

Christ will thus descend into our air, to such a distance from the surface of the earth, that every one, when all shall be gathered together, shall see him, Rev. i. 7. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." Christ will make this appearance suddenly, and to the great surprise of the inhabitants of the earth. It is therefore compared to a cry at midnight, by which men are wakened in a great surprise.

2. At the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed. As soon as Christ is descended, the last trumpet shall sound, as a notification to all mankind to appear; at which mighty sound shall the dead be immediately raised, and the living changed: 1 Cor. xv. 52. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Matt. xxiv. 31. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." 1 Thess. iv. 16. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." There will be some great and remarkable signal given for the rising of the dead, which it seems will be some mighty sound, caused by the angels of God, who shall attend on Christ.

Upon this all the dead shall rise from their graves; all both small and great, who shall have lived upon earth since the foundation of the world; those who died before the flood, and those who were drowned in the flood, all that have died since that time, and that shall die to the end of the world.

There will be a great moving upon the face of the earth, and in the waters, in bringing bone to his bone, in opening graves, and bringing together all the scattered particles of dead bodies. The earth shall give up the dead that are in it, and the sea shall give up the dead that are in it.

However the parts of the bodies of many are divided and scattered; however many have been burnt, and their bodies have been turned to ashes and smoke, and driven to the four winds; however many have been eaten of wild beasts, of the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; however many have consumed away upon the face of the earth, and great part of their bodies have ascended in exhalations; yet the all-wise and all-powerful God can immediately bring every part to his part again.

Of this vast multitude some shall rise to life, and others to condemnation. John v. 28, 29. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

When the bodies are prepared, the departed souls shall again enter into their bodies, and be re-united to them, never more to be separated. The souls of the wicked shall be brought up out of hell, though not out of misery, and shall very unwillingly enter into their bodies, which will be but eternal prisons to them. Rev. xx. 13. "And death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them."

They shall lift their eyes full of the utmost amazement and horror to see their awful Judge. And perhaps the bodies with which they shall be raised will be most filthy and loathsome, thus properly corresponding to the inward, moral turpitude of their souls.

The souls of the righteous shall descend from heaven together with Christ and his angels: 1 Thess. iv. 14. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." They also shall be re-united to their bodies, that they may be glorified with them. They shall receive their bodies prepared by God to be mansions of pleasure to all eternity. They shall be every way fitted for the uses, the exercises, and delights of perfectly holy and glorified souls. They shall be clothed with a superlative beauty, similar to that of Christ's glorious body: Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Their bodies shall rise incorruptible, no more liable to pain or disease, and with an extraordinary

vigour and vivacity, like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." With what joy will the souls and bodies of the saints meet, and with what joy will they lift up their heads out of their graves to behold the glorious sight of the appearing of Christ! And it will be a glorious sight to see those saints arising out of their graves, putting off their corruption, and putting on incorruption and glory.

At the same time, those that shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. Their bodies shall pass through a great change, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

"Behold, I show you a great mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." The bodies of the wicked then living will be changed into such hideous things, as shall be answerable to the loathsome souls that dwell in them, and such as shall be prepared to receive and administer eternal torments without dissolution.

But the bodies of the righteous shall be changed into the same glorious and immortal form in which those that shall be raised will appear.

3. They shall all be brought to appear before Christ, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left; Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 33. The wicked, however unwilling, however full of fear and horror, shall be brought or driven before the judgment-seat. However they may try to hide themselves, and for this purpose creep into dens and caves of the mountains, and cry to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; yet there shall not one escape; to the judge they must come, and stand on the left hand with devils. On' the contrary, the righteous will be joyfully conducted to Jesus Christ, probably by the angels. Their joy will, as it were, give them wings to carry them thither. They will with ecstasies and raptures of delight meet their friend and Saviour, come into his presence, and stand at his right hand.

Besides the one standing on the right hand and the other on the left, there seems to be this difference between them, that when the dead in Christ shall be raised, they will all be

caught up into the air, where Christ shall be, and shall be there at his right hand during the judgment, never more to set their feet on this earth. Whereas the wicked shall be left standing on the earth, there to abide the judgment. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

And what a vast congregation will there be of all the men, women, and children that shall have lived upon earth from the beginning to the end of the world! Rev. xx. 12. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

4. The next thing will be, that the books shall be opened: Rev. xx. 12. "I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God; and the books were opened." Which books seem to be these two, the book of God's remembrance, and the book of Scripture; the former as the evidence of their deeds which are to be judged, the latter as the rule of judgment. The works both of the righteous and of the wicked will be brought forth, that they may be judged according to them, and those works will be tried according to the appointed and written rule.

(1.) The works of both righteous and wicked will be rehearsed. The book of God's remembrance will be first opened. The various works of the children of men are, as it were, written by God in a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. "A book of remembrance was written before him." However ready ungodly men may be to make light of their own sins, and to forget them; yet God never forgetteth any of them: neither doth God forget any of the good works of the saints. If they give but a cup of cold water with a spirit of charity, God remembers it.

The evil works of the wicked shall then be brought forth to light. They must then hear of all their profaneness, their impenitence, their obstinate unbelief, their abuse of ordinances, and various other sins. The various aggravations of their sins will also be brought to view, as how this man sinned after such and such warnings, that after the receipt of such and such mercies; one after being so and so favoured with outward light, another after having been the subject of inward conviction, excited by the immediate agency of God. Concerning these sins, they shall be called to account to see what answer they can make for themselves: Matt. xii. 36" But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Rom. xiv. 12.

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

The good works of the saints will also be brought forth as evidences of their sincerity, and of their interest in the righteousness of Christ. As to their evil works, they will not be brought forth against them on that day; for the guilt of them will not lie upon them, they being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Judge himself will have taken the guilt of their sins upon him; therefore their sins will not stand against them in the book of God’s remembrance. The account of them will appear to have been cancelled before that time. The account that will be found in God’s book will not be of debt, but of credit. God cancels their debts, and sets down their good works, and is pleased, as it were, to make himself a debtor for them, by his own gracious act.

Both good and bad will be judged according to their works: Rev. xx. 12. “And the dead were judged out of those things that were found written in the books, according to their works;” and ver. 13. “And they were judged every man according to their works ” Though the righteous are justified by faith, and not by their works; yet they shall be judged *according* to their works: then works shall be brought forth as the evidence of their faith. Their faith on that great day shall be tried by its fruits. If the works of any man shall have been bad, if his life shall appear to have been unchristian, that will condemn him, without any further inquiry. But if his works, when they shall be examined, prove good and of the right sort, he shall surely be justified. They will be declared as a sure evidence of his having believed in Jesus Christ, and of his being clothed with his righteousness. But by works we are to understand all voluntary exercises of the faculties of the soul; as for instance, the words and conversation of men, as well as what is done with their hands: Matt. xii. “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Nor are we to understand only outward acts, or the thoughts outwardly expressed, but also the thoughts themselves, and all the inward workings of the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart: Rev. ii. 23. “I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins, and I will give unto every one of you according to his works.” Nor will only positive sins be brought into judgment but also omissions of duty, as is manifest by Matt. xxv. 42,. &c. “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink,” &c. On that day secret and hidden *wickedness* will be brought to light. All the uncleanness,

injustice, and violence, of which men have been guilty in secret, shall be manifest both to angels and men.

Then it will be made to appear, how this and that man have indulged themselves in wicked imaginations, in lascivious, covetous, malicious, or impious desires and wishes; and how others have harboured in their hearts enmity against God and his law; also impenitency and unbelief, notwithstanding all the means used with them, and motives set before them, to induce them to repent, return, and live.

The *good works* of the saints also, which were done in secret, shall then be made public, and even the pious and benevolent affections and designs of their hearts; so that the real and secret characters of both saints and sinners shall then be most clearly and publicly displayed.

(2.) The book of Scripture will be opened, and the works of men will be tried by that touchstone.

Their works will be compared with the word of God. That which God gave men for the rule of their action while in this life, shall then be made the rule of their judgment. God hath told us beforehand, what will be the rule of judgment. We are told in the Scriptures upon what terms we shall be justified, and upon what terms we shall be condemned. That which God hath given us to be our rule in our lives, he will make his own rule in judgment.

The rule of judgment will be twofold. The *primary* rule of judgment will be the law. The law ever hath stood, and ever will stand in force, as a rule of judgment, for those to whom the law was given: Matt. v. 18. "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The law will so far be made the rule of judgment, that not one person at that day shall by any means be justified or condemned, in a way inconsistent with that which is established by the law. As to the wicked, the law will be so far the rule of judgment respecting them, that the sentence denounced against them will be the sentence of the law. The righteous will be so far judged by the law, that although their sentence will not be the sentence of the law, yet it will by no means be such a sentence as shall be inconsistent with the law, but such as it allows: for it will be by the righteousness of the law that they shall be justified.

It will be inquired concerning every one, both righteous and wicked, whether the law stands against him, or whether he hath a fulfilment of the law to show. As to the *righteous*, they will have fulfilment to show; they will have it to plead, that the judge himself hath fulfilled the law for them; that he hath both satisfied for their sins, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them: Rom. x. 4. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." But as to the wicked, when it shall be found, by the book of God's remembrance, that they have broken the law, and have no fulfilment of it to plead, the sentence of the law shall be pronounced upon them.

A *secondary* rule of judgment will be the gospel, or the covenant of grace, wherein it is said, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned:" Rom. ii. 16. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." By the gospel, or covenant of grace, eternal blessedness will be adjudged to believers. When it shall be found that the law hinders not, and that the curse and condemnation of the law stands not against them, the reward of eternal life shall be given them, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. The sentence will be pronounced. Christ will say to the wicked on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How dreadful will these words of the judge be to the poor, miserable, despairing wretches on the left hand! How amazing will every syllable of them be! How will they pierce them to the soul! These words show the greatest wrath and abhorrence. Christ will bid them depart; he will send them away from his presence, will remove them for ever far out of his sight, into an everlasting separation from God, as being most loathsome, and unfit to dwell in his presence, and enjoy communion with him.

Christ will call them *cursed*; *Depart, ye cursed*, to whom everlasting wrath and ruin belong; who are by your own wickedness prepared for nothing else, but to be firebrands of hell; who are the fit objects and vessels of the vengeance and fury of the Almighty. *Into fire*: he will not send them away merely into a loathsome prison, the receptacle of the filth arid rubbish of the universe; but into a furnace of fire; that must be their dwelling-place, there they must be tormented with the most racking pain and anguish. It is *everlasting* fire; there is eternity in the sentence, which infinitely aggravates the doom, and will make every word of it immensely more dreadful, sinking, and amazing to the souls that receive it. *Prepared*

*for the devil and his angels*: this sets forth the greatness and intenseness of the torments, as the preceding part of the sentence does the duration. It shows the dreadful of that fire to which they shall be condemned, that it is the same that is prepared for the devils, those foul spirits and great enemies of God. Their condition will be the same as that of the devils, in many respects; particularly as they must burn in the fire for ever.

This sentence will doubtless be pronounced in such an awful manner as shall be a terrible manifestation of the wrath of the judge. There will be divine, holy, and almighty wrath manifested in the countenance and voice of the judge; and we know not what other manifestations of anger will accompany the sentence. Perhaps it will be accompanied with thunders and lightnings, far more dreadful than were on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law. Correspondent to these exhibitions of divine wrath will be the appearances of terror and most horrible amazement in the condemned.

How will all their faces look pale! how will death sit upon their countenances, when those words shall be heard! What dolorous cries, shrieks, and groans! What trembling, and wringing of hands, and gnashing of teeth, will there then be!

But with the most benign aspect, in the most endearing manner, and with the sweetest expressions of love, will Christ invite his saints on his right hand to glory; saying, “come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” He will not bid them to go from him, but *to come with him*; to go where he goes; to dwell where he dwells; to enjoy him, and to partake with him. He will call them blessed, blessed of *his Father*, blessed by him whose blessing is infinitely the most desirable, namely, God. *Inherit the kingdom*: they are not only invited to go with Christ, and to dwell with him, but to inherit a kingdom with him; to sit down with him on his throne, and to receive the honour and happiness of a heavenly kingdom. “Prepared for you from the foundation of the world:” this denotes the sovereign and eternal love of God, as the source of their blessedness. He puts them in mind, that God was pleased to set his love upon them, long before they had a being, even from eternity; that therefore God made heaven on purpose for them, and fitted it for their delight and happiness.

6. Immediately after this, the sentence will be executed, as we are informed. Matt. xxv. 46. “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” When the words of the sentence shall have once proceeded out of the mouth of the judge, then

that vast and innumerable throng of ungodly men shall go away, shall be driven away, shall be necessitated to go away with devils, and shall with dismal cries and shrieks be cast into the great furnace of fire prepared for the punishment of devils, the perpetual thunders and lightnings of the wrath of God following them. Into this furnace they must in both soul and body enter, never more to come out.

Here they must spend eternal ages in wrestling with the most excruciating torments, and in crying out in the midst of the most dreadful flames, and under the most insupportable wrath.

On the other hand; the righteous shall ascend to heaven with their glorified bodies, in company with Christ, his angels, and all that host which descended with him; they shall ascend in the most joyful and triumphant manner, and shall enter with Christ into that glorious and blessed world, which had for the time been empty of its creature inhabitants. Christ having given his church that perfect beauty, and crowned it with that glory, honour, and happiness, which were stipulated in the covenant of redemption before the world was, and which he died to procure for them; and having made it a truly glorious church, every way complete, will present it before the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Thus shall the saints be instated in everlasting glory, to dwell there with Christ, who shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, to the full enjoyment of God, and to an eternity of the most holy, glorious, and joyful employments.

## **Sect. V**

All will be done in righteousness.

Christ will give to every man his due, according to a most righteous rule. Those who shall be condemned will be most justly condemned; will be condemned to that punishment which they shall most justly deserve; and the justice of God in condemning them will be made most evident.

Now the justice of God in punishing wicked men, and especially in the degree of their punishment, is often blasphemously called in question. But it will be made clear and apparent to all; their own consciences will tell them that the sentence is just, and all cavils will be put to silence.

So those that shall be justified shall be most justly adjudged to eternal life. Although they also were great sinners, and deserved eternal death; yet it will not be against justice or the law, to justify them, they will be in Christ. But the acquitting of them will be but giving the reward merited by Christ's righteousness, Rom. iii. 26. "That God may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Christ will judge the world in righteousness, particularly as he will give to everyone a *due proportion* either of reward or punishment, according to the various characters of those who shall be judged. The punishments shall be duly proportioned to the number and aggravations of the sins of the wicked; and the rewards of the righteous shall be duly proportioned to the number of their holy acts and affections, and also to the degree of virtue implied in them.? I would observe further,

1. That Christ cannot fail of being just in judging, through *mistake*. He cannot take some to be sincere and godly, who are not so, nor others to be hypocrites, who are really sincere. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He can never err in determining what is justice in particular cases, as human judges often do. Nor can he be blinded by prejudices, as human judges are very liable to be. Deut. x. 17. "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." It is impossible he should be deceived by the excuse, and false colours, and pleas of the wicked, as human judges very commonly are. It is equally impossible that he should err, in assigning to everyone his proper proportion of reward or punishment, according to his wickedness or good works. His knowledge being infinite, will effectually guard him against all these, and other such errors.

2. He cannot fail of judging righteously through an *unrighteous* disposition; for he is infinitely just and holy in his nature. Deut. xxxii. 4. "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." It is not possible that an infinitely powerful, self-sufficient being should be under any temptation to injustice. Nor is it possible that an infinitely wise being, who knoweth all things, should not choose justice. For he who perfectly knows all things, perfectly knows how much more amiable justice is than injustice; and therefore must choose it.

## Sect. VI

Those things which will immediately follow the Day of Judgment.

1. After the sentence shall have been pronounced, and the saints shall have ascended with Christ into glory, this world will be dissolved by fire: the conflagration will immediately succeed the judgment. When an end shall have been put to the present state of mankind, this world, which was the place of their habitation during that state, will be destroyed, there being no further use for it.

This earth which had been the stage upon which so many scenes had been acted, upon which there had been so many great and famous kingdoms and large cities; where there had been so many wars, so much trade and business carried on for so many ages; shall then be destroyed. These continents, these islands, these seas and rivers, these mountains and valleys, shall be seen no more at all: all shall be destroyed by devouring flames. This we are plainly taught in the word of God. 2 Pet. iii. 7. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

2. Both the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the saints will be increased, beyond what shall be before the judgment. The misery of the wicked will be increased, as they will be tormented not only in their souls, but also in their bodies, which will be prepared both to receive and administer torment to their souls. There will doubtless then be the like connexion between soul and body, as there is now; and therefore the pains and torments of the one will affect the other. And why may we not suppose that their torments will be increased as well as those of the devils?

Concerning them we are informed, (Jam. ii. 19.) that they believe there is one God, and tremble in the belief; expecting no doubt that he will inflict upon them, in due time, more severe torments than even those which they now suffer. We are also informed that they are bound "in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; *and* unto the judgment of the great day;" (2 Pet. ii. 4. and Jude 6.) which implies that their full punishment is not yet

executed upon them, but that they are now reserved as prisoners in hell, to receive their just recompense on the day of judgment. Hence it was that they thought Christ was *come to torment them before the time*. Matt. viii. 29. Thus the punishment neither of wicked men nor devils will be complete before the final judgment.

No more will the happiness of the saints be complete before that time. Therefore we are in the New Testament so often encouraged with promises of the resurrection of the dead, and of the day when Christ shall come the second time. These things are spoken of as the great objects of the expectation and hope of Christians. A state of separation of soul and body is to men an unnatural state. Therefore when the bodies of the saints shall be raised from the dead, and their souls shall be again united to them, as their state will be more natural, so doubtless it will be more happy.

Their bodies will be *glorious* bodies, and prepared to administer as much to their happiness, as the bodies of the wicked will be to administer to their misery.

We may with good reason suppose the accession of happiness to the souls of the saints will be great, since the occasion is represented as the marriage of the church, and the Lamb; Rev. xix. 7. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Their joy will then be increased, because they will have new arguments of joy. The body of Christ will then be perfect, the church will be complete; all the parts of it will have come into existence, which will not be the case before the end of the world; no parts of it will be under sin or affliction: all the members of it will be in a perfect state; and they shall all be together by themselves, none being mixed with ungodly men. Then the church will be as a bride adorned for her husband, and therefore she will exceedingly rejoice.

Then also the Mediator will have fully accomplished his work. He will then have destroyed, and will triumph over, all his enemies. Then Christ will have fully obtained his reward, and fully accomplished the design which was in his heart from all eternity. For these reasons Christ himself will greatly rejoice, and his members must needs proportionably rejoice with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works which he hath been doing from the beginning of the world. All the designs of God will be unfolded in their events; then his marvellous contrivance in his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable works will appear, the ends being obtained. Then the works of God being perfected, the divine glory will more abundantly appear. These things will cause a great accession of happiness to the saints, who

shall behold them. Then God will have fully glorified himself, his Son, and his elect; then he will see that all is very good, and will entirely rejoice in his own works. At the same time the saints also, viewing the works of God brought thus to perfection, will rejoice in the view, and receive from it a large accession of happiness.

Then God will make more abundant manifestations of his glory, and of the glory of his Son; then he will more plentifully pour out his Spirit, and make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, and by means of all these will so increase the happiness of the saints, as shall be suitable to the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and to such a joyful occasion, the completion of all things. In this glory and happiness will the saints remain for ever and ever.

## **Sect. VII**

The uses to which this doctrine is applicable.

I. The *first use* proper to be made of this doctrine is of *instruction*. Hence many of the mysteries of Divine Providence may be unfolded. There are many things in the dealings of God towards the children of men, which appear very mysterious, if we view them without having an eye to this last judgment, which yet, if we consider this judgment, have no difficulty in them. As,

1. That God suffers the wicked to live and prosper in the world. The infinitely holy and wise Creator and Governor of the world must necessarily hate wickedness; yet we see many wicked men spreading themselves as a green bay-tree; they live with impunity; things seem to go well with them, and the world smiles upon them. Many who have not been fit to live, who have held God and religion in the greatest contempt, who have been open enemies to all that is good, who by their wickedness have been the pests of mankind; many cruel tyrants, whose barbarities have been such as would even fill one with horror to hear or read of them; yet have lived in great wealth and outward glory, have reigned over great and mighty kingdoms and empires, and have been honoured as a sort of earthly gods.

Now, it is very mysterious, that the holy and righteous Governor of the world, whose eye beholds all the children of men, should suffer it so to be, unless we look forward to the day of judgment; and then the mystery is unravelled. For although God for the present keeps

silence, and seems to let them alone; yet then he will give suitable manifestations of his displeasure against their wickedness; they shall then receive condign punishment. The saints under the Old Testament were much stumbled at these dispensations of Providence, as you may see in Psal. lxxiii. and Jer. ch. xii. The difficulty to them was so great, because then a future state and a day of judgment were not revealed with that clearness with which they are now.

2. God sometimes suffers some of the best of men to be in great affliction, poverty, and persecution. The *wicked* rule, while *they* are subject; the wicked are the head, and they are the tail; the wicked domineer, while they serve, and are oppressed, yea are trampled under their feet, as the mire of the streets. These things are very common, yet they seem to imply great confusion. When the wicked are exalted to power and authority, and the godly are oppressed by them, things are quite out of joint: Prov. xx. 26. "A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." Sometimes one wicked man makes many hundreds, yea thousands, of precious saints a sacrifice to his lust and cruelty, or to his enmity against virtue and the truth, and puts them to death for no other reason but that for which they are especially to be esteemed and commended.

Now, if we look no further than the present state, these things appear strange and unaccountable.

But we ought not to confine our views within such narrow limits. When God shall have put an end to the present state, these things shall all be brought to rights. Though God suffers things to be so for the present, yet they shall not proceed in this course always; comparatively speaking, the present state of things is *but for a moment*. When all shall be settled and fixed by a divine judgment, the righteous shall be exalted, honoured, and rewarded, and the wicked shall be depressed and put under their feet. However the wicked now prevail against the righteous, yet the righteous shall at last have the ascendant, shall come off conquerors, and shall see the just vengeance of God executed upon those who now hate and persecute them.

3. It is another mystery of providence, that God suffers so much public injustice to take place in the world. There are not only private wrongs, which in this state pass unsettled, but many public wrongs, wrongs done by men acting in a public character, and wrongs which affect nations, kingdoms, and other public bodies of men. Many suffer by men in public

offices, from whom there is no refuge, from whose decisions there is no appeal. Now it seems a mystery that these things are tolerated, when he that is rightfully the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world is perfectly just; but at the final judgment all these wrongs shall be adjusted, as well as those of a more private nature.

II. Our *second use* of this subject shall be to apply it to the *awakening* of sinners. You that have not the fear of God before your eyes, that are not afraid to sin against him, consider seriously what you have heard concerning the day of judgment. Although these things be now future and unseen, yet they are real and certain. If you now be left to yourselves, if God keep silence, and judgment be not speedily executed, it is not because God is regardless how you live, and how you behave yourselves. Now indeed God is invisible to you, and his wrath is invisible; but at the Day of Judgment, you yourselves shall see him with your bodily eyes: you shall not then be able to keep out of his sight, or to avoid seeing him: Rev. i. 7. "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." You shall see him coming in the clouds of heaven; your ears shall hear the last trumpet, that dreadful sound, the voice of the archangel; your eyes shall see your judge sitting on the throne, they shall see those manifestations of wrath which there will be in his countenance; your ears shall hear him pronounce the sentence.

Seriously consider, if you live in the ways of sin, and appear at that day with the guilt of it upon you, how you will be able to endure the sight or the hearing of these things, and whether horror and amazement will not be likely to seize you, when you shall see the judge descending, and hear the trump of God. What account will you be able to give, when it shall be inquired of you, why you led such a sinful, wicked life? What will you be able to say for yourselves, when it shall be asked, why you neglected such and such particular duties, as the duty of secret prayer, for instance? or why you have habitually practised such and such particular sins or lusts? Although you be so careless of your conduct and manner of life, make so light of sin, and proceed in it so freely, with little or no dread or remorse; yet you must give an account of every sin that you commit, of every idle word that you speak, and of every sinful thought of your hearts. Every time you deviate from the rules of justice, of temperance, or of charity; every time you indulge any lust, whether secretly or openly, you

must give an account of it: it will never be forgotten, it stands written in that book which will be opened on that day.

Consider the rule you will be judged by. It is the perfect rule of the divine law, which is exceeding strict, and exceeding broad. And how will you ever be able to answer the demands of this law?—Consider also,

1. That the judge will be your *supreme* judge. You will have no opportunity to appeal from his decision. This is often the case in this world; when we are dissatisfied with the decisions of a judge, we often may appeal to a higher, a more knowing, or a more just judicatory. But no such appeal can be made from our Divine Judge; no such indulgence will be allowed: or if it were allowed, there is no superior judge to whom the appeal should be made. By his decision, therefore, you must abide.

2. The judge will be *omnipotent*. Were he a mere man, like yourselves, however he might judge and determine, you might resist, and by the help of others, if not by your own strength, prevent or elude the execution of the judgment. But the judge being omnipotent, this is utterly impossible. In vain is all resistance, either by yourselves, or by whatever help you can obtain: “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished,” Prov. xi. 21. As well might you “set the briers and thorns in battle against God,” Isa. xxvii. 4.

3. The judge will be *inexorable*. Human judges may be prevailed upon to reverse their sentence, or at least to remit something of its severity. But in vain will be all your entreaties, all your cries and tears to this effect, with the great Judge of the world. Now indeed he inclines his ear, and is ready to hear the prayers, cries, and entreaties of all mankind; but then the day of grace will be past, and the door of mercy be shut: then although ye spread forth your hands, yet the judge will hide his eyes from you; yea, though ye make many prayers, he will not hear: Isa. i. 15. Then the judge will deal in fury: his eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity: and though ye cry in his ears with a loud voice, yet will he not hear you: Ezek. viii. 18. And you will find no place of repentance in God, though you seek it carefully with tears.

4. The judge at that day will not mix mercy with *justice*. The time for mercy to be shown to sinners will then be past. Christ will then appear in another character than that of the merciful Saviour. Having laid aside the inviting attributes of grace and mercy, he will clothe

himself with justice and vengeance. He will not only, in general, exact of sinners the demands of the law, but he will exact the whole, without any abatement; he will exact the very uttermost farthing, Matt. v. 26. Then Christ will come to fulfil that in Rev. xiv. 10. "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation." The punishment threatened to ungodly men is *without any pity*: See Ezek. v. 11. "Neither shall mine eye spare; neither will I have any pity." Here all judgments have a mixture of mercy; but the wrath of God will be poured out upon the wicked without mixture, and vengeance will have its full weight.

III. I shall apply myself, *thirdly*, to several *different characters* of men.

1. To those who live in secret wickedness. Let such consider, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Secrecy is your temptation. Promising yourselves this, you practise many things, you indulge many lusts, under the cover of darkness, and in secret corners, which you would be ashamed to do, in the light of the sun, and before the world. But this temptation is entirely groundless. All your secret abominations are even now perfectly known to God, and will also hereafter be made known both to angels and men: Luke xii. 2, 3. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."

Before human judges are brought only those things which are known; but before this judge shall be brought the most "hidden things of darkness, and even the counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5. All your secret uncleanness, all your secret fraud and injustice, all your lascivious desires, wishes, and designs, all your inward covetousness, which is idolatry, all your malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts and purposes, whether brought forth into practice or not, shall then be made manifest, and you shall be judged according to them. Of these things, however secret, there will be need of no other evidence than the testimony of God and of your own consciences.

2. To such as are not just and upright in their dealings with their fellow-men. Consider, that all your dealings with men must be tried, must be brought forth into judgment, and there compared with the rules of the word of God. All your actions must be judged according to those things which are found written in the book of the word of God. If your ways of dealing

with men shall not agree with those rules of righteousness, they will be condemned. Now, the word of God directs us to practise entire justice: "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow," Deut. xvi. 20. and to do to others as we would they should do to us. But how many are there, whose dealings with their fellow-men, if strictly tried by these rules, would not stand the test!

God hath, in his word, forbidden all deceit and fraud in our dealings one with another, Lev. xi. 13. He hath forbidden us to oppress one another, Lev. xxv. 14. But how frequent are practices contrary to those rules, and which will not bear to be tried by them! How common are fraud and trickiness in trade! How will men endeavour to lead on those with whom they trade in the dark, that so they may make their advantage! Yea, lying in trading is too common a thing among us.

How common are such things as that mentioned, Prov. xx. 14. "It is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

Many men will take the advantage of another's ignorance to advance their own gain, to his wrong; yea, they seem not to scruple such practices. Beside downright lying, men have many ways of blinding and deceiving one another in trade, which are by no means right in the sight of God, and will appear to be very unjust, when they shall be tried by the rule of God's word at the Day of Judgment. And how common a thing is oppression or extortion, in taking any advantage that men can by any means obtain, to get the utmost possible of their neighbour for what they have to dispose of, and their neighbour needs!

Let such consider, that there is a God in heaven, who beholds them, and sees how they conduct themselves in their daily traffic with one another; and that he will try their works another day. Justice shall assuredly take place at last. The righteous Governor of the world will not suffer injustice without control; he will control and rectify it, by returning the injury upon the head of the injurer: Matt. vii. 2. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

3. To those who plead for the lawfulness of practices generally condemned by God's people. You, who do this, consider that your practices must be tried at the day of judgment. Consider, whether or no they are likely to be approved by the most holy Judge at that day: Prov. v. 21. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord; and he pondereth all his

goings.” However, by your carnal reasonings, you may deceive your own hearts, yet you will not be able to deceive the judge, he will not hearken to your excuses, but will try your ways by the rule; he will know whether they be straight or crooked.

When you plead for these and those liberties which you take, let it be considered, whether they be likely to be allowed of by the judge at the last great day. Will they bear to be tried by his eyes, which are purer than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?

4. To those who are wont to excuse their wickedness. Will the excuses which you make for yourselves be accepted at the day of judgment? If you excuse yourselves to your own consciences, by saying, that you were under such and such temptations which you could not withstand; that corrupt nature prevailed, and you could not overcome it; that it would have been so and so to your damage, if you had done otherwise; that if you had done such a duty, you would have brought yourselves into difficulty, would have incurred the displeasure of such and such friends, or would have been despised and laughed at; or if you say, you did no more than it was the common custom to do, no more than many godly men have done, no more than certain persons of good reputation now practise; that if you had done otherwise, you would have been singular; if these be your excuses for the sins which you commit, or for the duties which you neglect, let me ask you, will they appear sufficient when they shall be examined at the day of judgment?

5. To those who live in impenitence and unbelief. There are some persons who live in no open vice, and perhaps conscientiously avoid secret immorality, who yet live in impenitence and unbelief.

They are indeed called upon *to repent and believe the gospel*, to forsake their evil ways and *thoughts*, and to return to God, that he may have mercy on them; to come unto Christ, *labouring*, and *heavy-laden with sin*, that they may obtain *rest* of him; and are assured, that if they *believe*, *they shall lie saved*; and that if they *believe not*, *they shall be damned*; and all the most powerful motives are set before them, to induce them to comply with these exhortations, especially those drawn from the eternal world; yet they persist in sin, they remain impenitent and unhumbled; they will not come unto Christ, that they may have life.

Now such men shall be brought into judgment for their conduct, as well as more gross sinners. Nor will they be any more able to stand in the judgment than the other. They resist

the most powerful means of grace; go on in sin against the clear light of the gospel; refuse to hearken to the kindest calls and invitations; reject the most amiable Saviour, the judge himself; and despise the free offers of eternal life, glory, and felicity. And how will they be able to answer for these things at the tribunal of Christ?

IV. If there be a day of judgment appointed, then let all be very strict in trying their own sincerity. God on that day will discover the secrets of all hearts. The judgment of that day will be like the fire, which burns up whatsoever is not true gold; wood, hay, stubble, and dross, shall be all consumed by the scorching fire of that day. The judge will be like a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap, which will cleanse away all filthiness, however it may be coloured over: Mal. iii. 2. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap:" and chap. iv. 1. "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts."

There are multitudes of men that wear the guise of saints, appear like saints, and their state, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their neighbours, is good. They have sheep's clothing.

But no disguise can hide them from the eyes of the judge of the world. His eyes are as a flame of fire: they search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men. He will see whether they be sound at heart; he will see from what principles they have acted. A fair show will in no degree deceive him, as it doth men in the present state. It will signify nothing to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and in thy name have we cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works." It will signify nothing to pretend to a great deal of comfort and joy, and to the experience of great religious affections, and to your having done many things in religion and morality, unless you have some greater evidences of sincerity.

Wherefore let everyone take heed that he be not deceived concerning himself; and that he depend not on that which will not bear examination at the day of judgment. Be not contented with this, that you have the judgment of men, the judgment of godly men, or that of ministers, in your favour. Consider that they are not to be your judges at last. Take

occasion frequently to compare your hearts with the word of God; that is the rule by which you are to be finally tried and judged.

And try yourselves by your works, by which also you must be tried at last. Inquire whether you lead holy Christian lives, whether you perform universal and unconditional obedience to all God's commands, and whether you do it from a truly gracious respect to God.

Also frequently beg of God, the judge, that he would search you, try you now, and discover you to yourselves, that you may see if you be insincere in religion; and that he would lead you in the way everlasting. Beg of God, that if you be not upon a good foundation, he would unsettle you, and fix you upon the sure foundation. The example of the psalmist in this is worthy of imitation: Psal. xxvi. 1, 2. "Judge me, O Lord, examine me, and prove me; try my reins and mine heart;" and Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God will search us hereafter, and discover what we are, both to ourselves and to all the world; let us pray that he would search us, and discover our hearts to us now. We have need of divine help in this matter; for the heart is deceitful above all things.

V. If God hath appointed a day to judge the world, let us judge and condemn ourselves for our sins. This we must do, if we would not be judged and condemned for them on that day. If we would escape condemnation, we must see that we justly may be condemned; we must be so sensible of our vileness and guilt, as to see that we deserve all that condemnation and punishment which are threatened; and that we are in the hands of God, who is the sovereign disposer of us, and will do with us as seemeth to himself good. Let us therefore often reflect on our sins, confess them before God, condemn and abhor ourselves, be truly humbled, and repent in dust and ashes.

VI. If these things be so, let us by no means be forward to judge others. Some are forward to judge others, to judge their hearts both in general and upon particular occasions, to determine as to the principles, motives, and ends of their actions. But this is to assume the province of God, and to set up ourselves as lords and judges. Rom. xiv. 4. "Who art thou, that thou judgest another man's servant?" Jam. iv. 11. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." To be thus disposed to judge and act censoriously towards others, is the way to be judged and condemned ourselves. Matt. vii. 1, 2. "Judge not, that ye

be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

VII. This doctrine affords matter of great consolation to the godly. This day of judgment, which is so terrible to ungodly men, affords no ground of terror to you, but abundant ground of joy and satisfaction. For though you now meet with more affliction and trouble than most wicked men, yet on that day you shall be delivered from all afflictions, and from all trouble. If you be unjustly treated by wicked men, and abused by them, what a comfort is it to the injured, that they may appeal to God, who judgeth righteously, Thee psalmist used often to comfort himself with this.

Upon these accounts the saints have reason to love the appearing of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. iv. 8. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all those that love his appearing.” This is to the saints a blessed hope. Tit. ii. 13. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This day may well be the object of their eager desire, and when they hear of Christ’s coming to judgment, they may well say, “ Even so come, Lord Jesus,” Rev. xxii. 20. It will be the most glorious day that ever the saints saw; it will be so both to those who shall die, and whose souls shall go to heaven and to those who shall then be found alive on earth: it will be the wedding-day of the church. Surely then in the consideration of the approach of this day, there is ground of great consolation to the saints.