

The Universal Judgment

by Samuel Davies

The universal judgment is a time when God will judge all people everywhere, based on their actions and faith in Christ, and it will determine the eternal fate of every person.

Scripture: Isaiah 33:14, Matthew 25:46, Acts 17:30, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, 2 Peter 3:7

Topics: "Final Judgment", "Eternal Punishment"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the solemn, tremendous, and glorious scene of the universal judgment, where all people will be commanded to repent as God has set a day for the world to be judged with justice. The righteous will receive eternal life in a kingdom prepared for them, while the ungodly will face eternal punishment in a fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The sermon vividly describes the separation of the righteous and the wicked, the trial of every hidden thing, the passing of final sentences, and the destruction of the present heavens and earth by fire, emphasizing the urgency and necessity of repentance before the impending judgment day.

Transcript

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"In the past God overlooked such ignorance--but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men--by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

"The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare!" 2 Peter 3:7,10

The present state is but the infancy of the world. All the events of time, even those which make such great noise to us, and determine the fate of kingdoms--are but as the trivial games of little children.

But if we look forward and trace events to maturity, we meet with vast, interesting, and majestic events! To one of those scenes I would direct your attention this day; I mean the solemn, tremendous, and glorious scene of the universal judgment!

You have sometimes seen a stately building in ruins; come now and view the ruins of a demolished world!

You have often seen a feeble mortal struggling in the agonies of death, and his shattered frame dissolved; come now and view the whole universe severely laboring and agonizing in her last convulsions, and her well-ordered system dissolved!

You have heard of earthquakes here and there that have laid huge cities in ruins; come now and feel the tremors and convulsions of the whole globe, which blend cities and countries, oceans and continents, mountains, plains, and valleys--in one giant heap!

You have a thousand times beheld the moon walking in brightness, and the sun shining in his strength; come now look and see the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood!

It is our lot to live in an age of war, blood, and slaughter; an age in which our attention is engaged by the dubious fate of kingdoms. Draw off your thoughts from these objects for an hour, and fix them on more solemn and vital objects. Come view this dread scene!

"The world alarmed, both earth and heaven o'erthrown,

And gasping nature's last tremendous groan;

Death's ancient scepter broke, the teeming tomb,

The Righteous Judge, and man's eternal doom!"

Such a scene there certainly is before us; for Paul tells us that "He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men--by raising Him from the dead!" Christ's resurrection is a demonstrative proof of it. My text is the conclusion of Paul's defense or sermon before the famous court of Areopagus, in the learned and philosophical city of Athens.

In this kingly assembly he speaks with the boldness, and in the evangelical strain of an apostle of Christ. He first inculcates upon them the great truths of natural religion, and labors faithfully, though in a very gentle and inoffensive manner, to reform them from that stupid idolatry and superstition into which even this learned philosophical city was sunk, though a Socrates, a Plato, and the most celebrated sages and moralists of pagan antiquity had lived and taught in it. Afterwards, in the close of his discourse, he introduces the glorious themes of Christianity, particularly the great duty of repentance, from evangelical motives, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment. But no sooner has he entered upon this subject than he is interrupted, and seems to have broken off abruptly; for when he had just hinted at the then unpopular doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We are told, "When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said: We want to hear you again on this subject."

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent!" In those dark times of ignorance which preceded the publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink at, or overlook the idolatry and various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world. That is, he seemed to take no notice of them, so as either to punish them, or to give the nations explicit calls to repentance. But now, says Paul, the case is altered! Now the gospel is published through the world, and therefore God will no longer seem to overlook the wickedness and impenitence of mankind--but publishes his great mandate to a rebel world, explicitly and loudly, commanding all men everywhere to repent! And he now

gives them particular motives and encouragements to this duty.

One motive of the greatest weight, which was never so clearly or extensively published before, is the doctrine of the universal judgment. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed." And surely the prospect of a universal judgment must be a strong motive to sinners to repent! This, if anything, will rouse them from their thoughtless security, and bring them to repentance.

Repentance should, and one would think must, be as extensive as this reason for it. This Paul intimates. "He now commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice!" Wherever the gospel publishes the doctrine of future judgment, there it requires all men to repent; and wherever it requires repentance, there it enforces the command of this alarming doctrine. God has given assurance to all men; that is, to all that hear the gospel, that he has appointed a day for this great purpose, and that Jesus Christ, God-man, is to preside in person in this majestic solemnity. He has given assurance of this; that is, sufficient ground of faith; and the assurance consists in this: that he has raised him from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ gives assurance of this in several respects. It is a specimen and a pledge of a general resurrection, that grand preparative for the judgment. The resurrection of Christ is an incontestable proof of his divine mission; for God will never work so unprecedented a miracle in favor of an impostor. The resurrection of Christ is also an authentic attestation of all our Lord's claims; and he expressly claimed the authority of supreme Judge as delegated to him by the Father; "the Father judges no man--but has committed all judgment to the Son." John 5:22. There is a peculiar fitness and propriety in this constitution. It is fit that a world placed under the administration of a Mediator--should have a mediatorial Judge. It is fit this high office should be conferred upon him as an honorary reward for his important services and extreme abasement. Because he humbled himself, therefore God has highly exalted him. Phil. 2:8, 9.

It is fit that creatures clothed with bodies should be judged by a man clothed in a body like themselves. Hence it is said that "God has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." John 5:27. This would seem a strange reason, did we not understand it in this light. Indeed, was Jesus Christ man only, he would be infinitely unequal to the office of universal Judge; but he is both God and man, 'Immanuel, God with us!' As such, he is the fittest person in the universe for the work. It is also fit that Christ should be the supreme Judge, as it will be a great encouragement to his people for their Mediator to execute this office.

And it may be added, that hereby the condemnation of the wicked will be rendered more conspicuously just; for, if a Mediator, a Savior, the Friend of sinners, condemns them--they must be worthy of condemnation indeed!

Let us now enter upon the majestic scene. But alas! what images shall I use to represent it? Nothing that we have ever seen, nothing that we have ever heard, nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time--can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and groveling, all is faint and obscure, that ever the sun shone upon--when compared with the grand phenomena of that day!

We are so accustomed to low and little objects, that it is impossible we should ever raise our thoughts to a suitable pitch of elevation. Before long we shall be amazed spectators of these majestic wonders, and our eyes and our ears will be our instructors! But now it is necessary we should have such ideas of them as

may affect our hearts, and prepare us for them. Let us therefore present to our view those representations which divine revelation--our only guide in this case--gives us . . .

of the person of the Judge, and the manner of his appearance;

of the resurrection of the dead, and the transformation of the living;

of the universal gathering of all men before the supreme tribunal;

of their separation to the right and left hand of the Judge, according to their characters;

of the judicial process itself;

of the decisive sentence;

of its execution,

and of the conflagration of the world!

As to the person of the Judge, the psalmist tells you that God is Judge himself. Psalm 1:6. Yet Christ tells us, "the Father judges no man--but has committed all judgment unto the Son; and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." John 5:22, 27. It is therefore Christ Jesus, God-man, as I observed, who shall sustain this high character as the universal Judge. And for the reasons already alleged, it is most fitting that it should be devolved upon him. Being both God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in him, and render him more fit for this office than if he were God only--or man only. This is the grand Judge before whom we must stand; and the prospect may inspire us with reverence, joy, and terror.

As for the manner of his appearance, it will be such as befits the dignity of his person and office. He will shine in all the uncreated glories of the Godhead, and in all the gentler glories of a perfect man.

His attendants will add a dignity befitting to His grand appearance, and will increase the solemnity and terror of the day. Let his own word describe them:

"The Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels!" Matthew 16:27.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him--he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory!" Matthew 25:31.

"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power!" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

And not only will the angels, those illustrious ministers of the court of heaven, attend upon that solemn occasion--but also all the saints who had left the world from Adam to that day; says Paul, "God will bring with Jesus--those who have fallen asleep in him." 1 Thess. 4:14.

The grand imagery in Daniel's vision is applicable to this day--and perhaps to this it primarily refers: "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all

ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened!" Daniel 7:9-10

Perhaps our Lord Jesus may exhibit himself to the whole world upon this most grand occasion, in the same glorious form in which he was seen by his favorite John, "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance!" Revelation 1:13-16

Another image of inimitable majesty and terror, the same writer gives us, when he says, "Then I saw a great white throne and HIM who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire!" Revelation 20:11-15

What an astonishing scene is this! The stable earth and heaven cannot bear the majesty and terror of His look; they fly away affrighted, and seek a place to hide themselves--but no place is found to shelter them; every region through the immensity of space, lies open before Him! This is the Judge before whom we must stand; and this is the manner of His appearance!

But is this the babe of Bethlehem--who lay and wept in the manger?

Is this the supposed son of the carpenter, the despised Galilean?

Is this the man of sorrows?

Is this He who was . . .

arrested,

condemned,

buffeted,

spit upon,

crowned with thorns,

executed as a slave and a criminal, upon the cross?

Yes, it is Him! The very same Jesus of Nazareth!

But oh how changed! How deservedly exalted! Heaven and earth bows before Him!

Now let his enemies appear and show their contempt and malignity!

Now, Pilate--condemn the King of the Jews as an usurper!

Now, you Jews, raise the clamor, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Now bow the knee in scorn, spit in His face, and buffet Him! Now tell the scourged impostor that He must die!

Now, you Deists and Infidels, dispute his divinity and the truth of his religion if you can. Now, you hypocritical professing Christians, try to impose upon him with your idle pretenses.

Now despise His grace, now laugh at His threatenings, and now make light of His displeasure--if you dare!

Ah! now their courage fails, and terror surrounds them! Now they try to hide in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. Now they call to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

But, alas! That LAMB who once bled as a sacrifice for sin--now appears in all the terrors of a LION! Oh! could they hide themselves in the bottom of the ocean, or in some rock that bears the weight of the mountains--how happy would they think themselves!

While the Judge is descending--the parties to be judged will be summoned to appear. But where are they? They are all asleep in their dusty beds--except that present generation. And how shall they be roused from their long sleep of thousands of years? Why, "the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God!" 1 Thess. 4:16. The trumpet shall sound, and those who are then alive shall not pass into eternity through the beaten road of death--but at the last trumpet they shall be changed--changed into immortals, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

Now all the millions of mankind, of whatever country and nation, whether they expect this tremendous day or not, all feel a shock through their whole frames, while they are instantaneously metamorphosed in every limb, and the pulse of immortality begins to beat strong in every part! Now also the slumberers under ground begin to stir, to rouse, and spring to life! Now see graves opening, tombs bursting, charnel-houses rattling, the earth heaving, and all alive, while these subterranean armies are bursting their way through! See clouds of human dust and broken bones darkening the air, and flying from country to country over intervening continents and oceans--to meet their kindred fragments, and repair the shattered frame with pieces collected from a thousand different quarters, where they were blown away by winds, or washed away by seas!

See what millions start up in company--in the spots where Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, and London once stood! Whole armies spring to life in fields where they once lost their lives in battle, and were left unburied! They spring up from fields which fattened with their blood, produced a thousand harvests, and now produce a crop of living men! See a succession of thousands of years rising in crowds from grave-yards round the places where they once attended, in order to prepare for this solemn and decisive day.

Nay, graves yawn, and swarms burst into life from under palaces, and buildings of pride and pleasure, in fields and forests, in thousands of places where graves were never suspected!

How are the living surprised to find people springing into life under their feet, or just beside them; some beginning to stir and heave the ground; others half-risen, and others quite disengaged from the

encumbrance of earth, and standing upright before them!

"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done!" Revelation 20:13. What vast multitudes which had slept in a watery grave, now emerge from rivers, and seas, and oceans, and throw them into a tumult! Now appear to the view of all the world--the Goliahs, the Anakim, and the other giants of ancient times! And now the millions of infants spring up at once!

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt!" Daniel 12:2.

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil will rise to the resurrection of damnation!" John 5:28-29.

"But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" Job 19:25-27

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality!" 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

As the characters, and consequently the doom of mankind, will be very different--so we may reasonably suppose they will rise in very different forms of glory or dishonor, of beauty or deformity. Their bodies indeed will all be improved to the highest degree, and all made vigorous, capacious, and immortal. But here lies the difference: the bodies of the righteous will be strengthened to bear an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory--but those of the wicked will be strengthened to sustain an exceeding great and eternal load of misery! Their strength will be but mere capacity to suffer a horrid capacity of greater pain!

The immortality of the righteous will be the duration of their happiness! But the immortality of the wicked will be the duration of their misery! Their immortality, the highest privilege of their nature--will be their heaviest curse! They would willingly exchange their duration with an insect of a day, or a fading flower.

The bodies of the righteous will "shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament forever and ever!" But the bodies of the wicked will be grim, and shocking, and ugly and hateful--as hell!

The bodies of the righteous will be fit mansions for their heavenly spirits to inhabit, and every feature will speak the delightful passions that agreeably work within. But the wicked will be but spirits of hell clothed in the material bodies; and malice, rage, despair, and all the infernal passions, will manifest in their countenances, and cast a dismal gloom around them! Oh! they will then be nothing else, but shapes of deformity and terror! They will look like the natives of hell, and spread horror around them with every look!

With what reluctance may we suppose will the souls of the wicked enter again into a state of union with these hellish bodies, that will be everlasting engines of torture to them--as they once were instruments of sin to their bodies!

But oh! with what joy will the souls of the righteous return to their old habitations, in which they once served their God with honest though feeble endeavors, and now so gloriously repaired and improved! How will they welcome the resurrection of their old companions from their long sleep in death, now made fit to share with them in the sublime employments and fruitions of heaven! Every organ will be an instrument of service and an inlet of pleasure, and the soul shall no longer be encumbered, but assisted by this union to the body.

Oh what surprising creatures can Omnipotence raise from the dust! To what a high degree of beauty can the Almighty refine the offspring of the earth! And into what miracles of glory and blessedness can he form them!

Now the Judge has come, the Judgment-seat is erected, the dead are raised. And what follows? Why, the universal gathering of all people before the Judgment-seat! The place of judgment will probably be the extensive region of the air, the most capacious for the reception of such a multitude; for Paul tells us that the saints shall "be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thess. 4:17. And that the air will be the place of judicature, perhaps, may be intimated when our Lord is represented as coming in the clouds, and sitting upon a cloudy throne.

These expressions can hardly be understood literally, for clouds which consisted of vapors and rarified particles of water--seem very improper materials for such a throne of judgment, but they may very properly intimate that Christ will make his appearance, and hold his court in the region of the clouds; that is, in the air! And perhaps that the rays of light and majestic darkness shall be so blended around him as to form the appearance of a cloud to the view of the wondering and gazing world!

To this throne of judgment, from whence our globe will lie open to view far and wide--will all the sons of men be convened. And they will be gathered together by the ministry of angels--the officers of this grand court. "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other!" Matthew 24:30, 31.

Their ministry also extends to the wicked, whom they will drag away to judgment and execution, and separate from the righteous. "The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Matthew 13:39-42

What a resplendent convocation, what a vast assembly is this! See flights of angels darting round the globe from east to west, from pole to pole--gathering up here and there the scattered saints, separating them out from among the crowd of the ungodly, and bearing them aloft on their wings to meet the Lord in the air!

Meanwhile the wretched crowd look and gaze, and stretch their hands, and would mount up along with them; but, alas! they must be left behind, and wait for another kind of convoy--a convoy of cruel, unrelenting devils, who shall snatch them up as their prey with malignant joy, and place them before the flaming tribunal.

Now all the sons of men meet in one immense assembly! Adam beholds the long line of his posterity; and they behold their common father. Now Europeans and Asiatics, the swarthy sons of Africa and the

savages of America--all mingle together. Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and Pagans, the learned and the ignorant, kings and subjects, rich and poor, free and slave--form one great crowd. Now all the vast armies that conquered or fell under Xerxes, Darius, Alexander, Caesar, and other illustrious warriors, unite in one vast army! There, in short, all the successive inhabitants of the earth for thousands of years--appear in one vast assembly. And how inconceivably great must the number be!

When the inhabitants of but one town meet together--you are struck with the survey. Were all the inhabitants of a kingdom convened in one place--how much more striking would be the sight! Were all the inhabitants of the kingdoms of the earth convened in one general assembly--how astonishing and vast would be that multitude be! But what is even this vast multitude, when compared with the long succession of generations that have peopled the globe, in all ages; and in all countries; from the first commencement of time--to the last day! Here numbers fail, and our thoughts are lost in the immense survey!

The extensive region of the air is very properly chosen as the place of judgment; for this earthly globe would not be sufficient for such a multitude to stand upon! In that prodigious assembly, my friends--you and I must mingle! And we shall not be lost in the crowd, nor escape the notice of our Judge! His eye will be as particularly fixed on each one of us--as though there were but one person before Him!

To increase the number, and add a majesty and terror to the assembly, the fallen angels also make their appearance at the judgment bar. This they have long expected with horror, as the period when their consummate misery is to commence. When Christ, in the form of a servant, exercised a god-like power over them in the days of his residence upon earth, they almost mistook his first coming as a Savior--for his second coming as their Judge; and therefore they expostulated, "have you come to torment us before the time?" Matthew 8:29. That is, "We expected that you would at last appear to torment us--but we did not expect your coming so soon!"

Agreeable to this, Peter tells us, "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment!" 2 Peter 2:4. To the same purpose Jude speaks: "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day!" Jude 6.

What horribly dreadful figures will these be! And what a direful appearance will they make at the judgment bar! Their powers blasted, stripped of their primeval glories, and lying in ruins! Yet dreadful even in ruins--gigantic forms of terror and deformity; horribly dreadful, fallen angels!

Now the Judge is seated--and anxious millions stand before Him waiting for their doom! As yet, there is no separation made between them; but men and devils, saints and sinners, are promiscuously blended together. But see! at the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion! They part, they sort together according to their character, and divide to the right and left. He Himself has told us, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him--He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another--as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right--and the goats on His left!" Matthew 25:31-33.

And, oh! what strange separations are now made! what multitudes that once ranked themselves among the saints, and were highly esteemed for their piety, by others as well as themselves--are now banished from among them, and placed with the trembling criminals on the LEFT hand!

And how many poor, honest-hearted, doubting, desponding souls, whose foreboding fears had often placed them there, now find themselves, to their agreeable surprise, stationed on the RIGHT hand of their Judge, who smiles upon them!

What relations are now broken! What hearts are now torn asunder! What intimate companions, what dear friendships are now parted forever! Neighbor from neighbor, friend from friend, parents from children, husband from wife! Those who were but one flesh, and who lay in one another's bosoms--must part forever. Those who lived in the same country, who joined the same denomination, who worshiped in the same place, who lived under one roof; who lay in the same womb, and sucked the same breast--must now part forever!

And is there no separation likely to be made then in our families or in our congregation? Is it likely that we shall all be placed in that blessed group on the right hand? Are all the members of our families prepared for that glorious station? Alas! are there not some families among us who, it is to be feared--shall all be sent off to the left hand, without so much as one exception?

For who are those miserable multitudes on the LEFT hand? There, through the medium of Scripture revelation, I see the drunkard, the swearer, the immoral, the liar, the defrauder, and the various classes of profane, profligate sinners. There I see the unbeliever, the impenitent, the lukewarm formalist, and the various classes of hypocrites, and half-Christians. There I see the families that do not call upon God's name, and whole nations that forget him. And, oh! what vast multitudes, what millions of millions of millions do all these make!

And do not some, alas! do not many of YOU belong to one or other of these classes of sinners whom God, and Christ, and Scripture, and conscience conspire to condemn? If so, to the left hand you must depart among devils and trembling criminals, whose guilty minds foretell their doom, before the judicial process begins.

But who are those glorious immortals upon the RIGHT hand? They are those who have surrendered themselves entirely to God, through Jesus Christ, who have heartily complied with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel; who have been formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the most earnest, persevering endeavor of their lives--to work out their own salvation, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world. These are some of the principal lineaments of character of those who shall have their safe and honorable station at the right hand of the sovereign Judge.

And is not this the prevailing character of some of you? I hope and believe that it is. Through the medium of Scripture revelation, I see you in that blessed station. And, oh! I would make an appointment with you this day to meet you there. Yes, let us this day appoint the time and place where we shall meet after the separation and dispersion that death will make among us; and let it be at the right hand of the Judge at the last day!

If I be so happy as to obtain some humble place there, I shall look for some of you, my dear people! There I shall expect your company, that we may ascend together to join in the more exalted services and enjoyments of heaven, as we have frequently in the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth.

But, oh! when I think what startling separations will then be made--I tremble lest I should miss some of YOU there! And are you not afraid lest you should miss some of your friends, or some of your family members there? Or that you should then see them move off to the LEFT hand, and looking back with

eagerness upon you, as if they would say, "This is my doom through YOUR carelessness! Had you but acted as a faithful friend towards me, while conversant with you or under your care--I might now have had my place among the blessed saints!" Oh! how could you bear such powerful, piercing looks from your child, or your friend! Therefore now do all in your power to "convert sinners from the error of their way, and to save their souls from death!"

When we entered upon this practical digression--we left all things ready for the judicial process. And now the TRIAL begins!

Now "God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Romans 2:16. All the works of people will then be tried! "For," says Paul, "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10. John in his vision "saw the dead judged according to their works." Revelation 20:12, 13. These works immediately refer to the actions of the life--but they may also include the inward temper, and thoughts of the soul, and the words of the lips; for all these shall be brought into judgment.

Says Solomon, "For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." Eccl. 12:14. And though we are too apt to think that we are not accountable for our words--he who is to be our Judge has told us that "for every careless word which men speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment; for by your words," as well as your actions, "you shall be justified; and by your words you shall be condemned." Matthew 12:36, 37.

What astonishing discoveries will this trial of every hidden thing make! What noble dispositions which never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes! What generous purposes crushed in embryo for lack of power to execute them! What pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty, or misconstrued by ignorance and prejudice! What affectionate aspirations, what devout exercises of heart, which lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, are now brought to full light, and receive the approbation of the Supreme Judge before the assembled universe!

But on the other hand: what works of shame and darkness are then revealed! What hidden things of dishonesty! What dire secrets of treachery, hypocrisy, lewdness, and various forms of wickedness artfully and industriously concealed from human sight! What horrid exploits of sin now burst to light in all their hellish colors, to the confusion of the guilty, and the astonishment and horror of the universe!

Surely the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell, or the biography of devils! Then the mask of deceit will be torn off! Clouded characters will clear up, and men as well as things will appear in their true light. Their hearts will be, as it were, turned outwards, and all their secrets exposed to full view!

The design of this judicial inquiry will not be to inform the omniscient Judge--but to convince all worlds of the justice of his proceedings. And this design renders it necessary that all these things should be laid open to their sight, that they may see the grounds upon which he passes sentence.

Does not the prospect of such a 'revealing' fill some of you with horror? For many of your actions, and especially of your thoughts--will not bear the light. How would it confound you, if all your secret thoughts were now all published, even in the small circle of your friends? How then, can you bear to have them all fully exposed before God, angels, and the universe! Will it not confound you with shame, and make you objects of everlasting contempt to all worlds!

These are the FACTS to be tried.

But by what RULE shall they be tried? From the goodness and justice of God--we may conclude that men will be judged by some rule known to them, or which at least it was in their power to know. Now the light of reason, the law of conscience, is a universal rule, and universally known--or at least knowable by all men, heathen and Muhammadans, as well as Jews and Christians. And therefore all mankind shall be judged by this rule. "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them." Romans 2:14, 15.

By this rule their consciences now acquit or condemn them, because they know that by this rule they shall then be judged. The conscience seems to be a kind of innate monitor of human nature. As the heathen were invincibly ignorant of every rule but the conscience--they shall be judged by this only. But as to those parts of the world that enjoyed, or might enjoy the advantages of Scriptural revelation, whether by tradition with the pre-Mosaic world, or in the writings of Moses and the prophets with the Jews, or in the clearer dispensation of the gospel with the Christian world--they shall be judged by this revealed law.

And by how much the more perfect the rule--by so much the stricter will their account be. That which would be an excusable infirmity in an African or an American Indian, may be an aggravated crime in us who enjoy such superior advantages. This is evident from the repeated declarations of sacred writ. "As many as have sinned without the law, (that is, without the written law,) shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned under the law--shall be judged by the law. This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares." Romans 2:12, 16.

"If I had not come and spoken to them," says the blessed Jesus, "they would not be guilty of sin." That is, they would not have had sin so aggravated; or they would not have had the particular sin of unbelief in rejecting the Messiah; but now they have no cloak for their sin. John 15:22. That is, now when they have had such abundant conviction, they are utterly inexcusable!

"This," says he, "is the condemnation;" that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation; "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19.

"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows!" (observe, ignorance is no sufficient excuse,) "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" Luke 12:47, 48.

Upon these maxims of eternal righteousness, the Judge will proceed in pronouncing the doom of the world; and it was upon these principles he declared, in the days of his flesh, that it should be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah--than for those places that enjoyed the advantages of his ministry, and misimproved them! Matthew 11:21-24. Whether upon these principles sinners among us have not reason to expect they will obtain a more horrid sentence among the million of sinners in that day, I leave you to judge, and to tremble at the thought!

There is another representation of this proceeding, which we often meet with in the sacred writings, in allusion to the forms of proceedings in human courts. In courts of law, law-books are referred to, opened, and read for the direction of the judges, and sentence is passed according to them. In allusion to this custom, Daniel, in vision, saw, "As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened!" Daniel 7:9-10.

And John had the same representation made to him: "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." Revelation 20:11-12.

Should we pursue this significant allusion, we may say--then will the book of the law of NATURE be opened; and mankind will be tried according to its precepts, and doomed according to its sentence. This is a plain and vast volume, opened and legible now to all who can read their own hearts; to all who have eyes to look round upon the works of God, which show his glory and their duty; and who have ears to hear the lectures which the sun and moon, and all the works of creation and providence, read to them night and day.

Then, too, will be opened the book of SCRIPTURE revelation, in all its parts, both the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ; and according to it--will those be judged who lived under one or other of these dispensations. Then it will appear that that neglected, old-fashioned book called the Bible is not a romance, or a system of trifling truths--but the standard of life and death to all who had access to it.

Then will also be opened the book of GOD'S REMEMBRANCE. In that book, are recorded all the thoughts, words, actions, both good and bad, of all people--and now the immense account shall be publicly read before the assembled universe.

Then, likewise, as a counterpart to this, will the book of CONSCIENCE be opened; conscience which, though unnoticed, writes our whole history as with an iron pen and the point of a diamond!

Then, also, we are expressly told, will be opened the book of LIFE, in which are contained all the names of all the heirs of heaven. Revelation 20:12. This seems to be an allusion to those registers which are kept in cities or corporations, of the names of all the citizens or members who have a right to all the privileges of the society. And I know not what we can understand by it so properly--as the perfect knowledge which the omniscient God has, and always had from eternity, of those on whom he purposed to bestow eternal life; and whom he has from eternity, as it were, registered as members of the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, or as citizens of that blessed city. These, having been all prepared by his grace in time--shall then be admitted into the New Jerusalem in that day of the Lord.

Farther, the representation which the Scripture gives us of the proceedings of that day leads us to conceive of WITNESSES being produced to prove the facts.

The omniscient Judge Himself, will be a witness against the guilty. "I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of

their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me--says the LORD Almighty!" Mal. 3:5. And he will, no doubt, be a witness for his people, and attest their sincere piety, their saving interest in Christ, and those good dispositions or actions which were known only to him.

Angels, also, who ministered to the heirs of salvation, and no doubt inspected the affairs of mankind, will be witnesses.

Devils too, who once tempted, will now become accusers.

Conscience within will also be a witness! It shall acquit the righteous of many unjust imputations, and attest the sincerity of their hearts and their many good actions. But oh! it will be the most terrible witness against the ungodly! They will be witnesses against themselves, (Joshua 24:22,) and this will render them self-tormentors! Conscience will re-echo to the voice of the Judge, and cry, "Guilty, guilty, to all his accusations!"

And who can make the wicked happy--when they torment themselves? Who can acquit them--when they are self-condemned? Conscience, whose voice is now so often suppressed--will then have full scope--and shall be regarded. Whom conscience condemns--the righteous Judge will also condemn; for, "if our hearts condemn us--God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things," 1 John 3:20. God knows many more grounds for condemning us than we, and therefore much more will he condemn us.

In short, so full will be the evidence against the sinner, that the Scripture which is full of striking imagery to affect human nature, gives life to inanimate things upon this occasion, and represents them as 'speaking'. Stones and dust shall witness against the ungodly. The dust under the feet of their ministers shall witness against them! Matthew 10:14. "The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it!" Habakkuk 2:11. "Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire." James 5:3. Nay, "The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him!" Job 20:27. Heaven and earth were called to witness, that life and death were set before them, Deuteronomy 30:19, and now they will give in their evidence that they chose death!

Thus God and all his creatures, heaven, earth, and hell--rise up against them, accuse and condemn them!

And will not the wicked accuse and witness against one another? Undoubtedly they will. They who lived or conversed together upon earth, and were spectators of each other's conduct--will then turn mutual witnesses against each other. Oh, astonishing thought! That friend should inform and witness against friend! That parents should inform and witness against children, and children against parents! That ministers should inform and witness against their people, and people against their ministers!

Alas! what a confounding testimony against each other must those give--who are now sinning together!

Thus the way is prepared for the passing sentence. The case was always clear to the omniscient Judge--but now it is so fully discussed and attested by so many evidences, that it is quite plain to the whole world of creatures--who can judge only by such evidence; and for whose conviction the formality of a judicial process is appointed.

How long a time this grand court will sit, we cannot determine, nor has God thought fit to inform us; but when we consider how particular the trial will be, and the innumerable multitude to be tried--it seems reasonable to suppose that it will be a long session. It is indeed often called a day; but it is evident a day in

such cases, does not signify a natural day--but the space of time allotted for transacting a business, though it be a hundred or even a thousand years.

Creatures are incapable of viewing all things at once, and therefore, since the trial, as I observed, is intended to convince them of the equity of the divine proceedings, it is proper the proceedings should be particular and leisurely, that they may have time to observe them.

We are now come to the grand crisis, upon which the eternal states of all mankind turn! I mean the passing the great decisive and final sentence.

Heaven and earth are all silence and attention, while the Judge, with smiles in his face, and a voice sweeter than heavenly music, turns to the glorious company on his RIGHT hand, and pours all the joys of heaven into their souls, in that transporting sentence, of which he has graciously left us a copy: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world!"

Every word is full of emphasis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the desires of those to whom it is addressed. They desired, and longed, and languished to be near their Lord; and now their Lord invites them, "Come near me, and dwell with me forever!" There was nothing they desired as much as the blessing of God, nothing they feared so much as his curse--and now their fears are entirely removed, and their desires fully accomplished, for the supreme Judge pronounces them 'blessed by his Father'. They were all poor in spirit, most of them poor in this world, and all sensible of their unworthiness. How agreeably then are they surprised, to hear themselves invited to a kingdom, invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood-royal, born to thrones and crowns! How will they be lost in wonder, joy, and praise--to find that the great God entertained thoughts of love towards them, before they had a being, or the world in which they dwelt had its foundation laid, and that he was preparing a kingdom for them--while they were nothing, unknown even in idea, except to himself?

O brethren! dare any of us expect this sentence will be passed upon us? Methinks the very thought would overwhelm us! Methinks our feeble frames would be unable to bear up under the ecstatic hope of such a weight of blessedness. Oh! if this is our sentence in that day, it is does not matter what we suffer while in our short sojourn on earth. That sentence of eternal blessedness will compensate for all, and annihilate the sufferings of ten thousand years.

But hearken! Another sentence breaks from the mouth of the angry Judge, like vengeful thunder! Nature gives a deep tremendous groan; the heavens lower and gather blackness, the earth trembles, and guilty millions sink with horror at the sound! And see, he whose words are works, whose mere creative fiat produces worlds out of nothing; he who could consign ten thousand worlds into nothing at a frown; he whose thunder quelled the insurrection of rebel angels in heaven, and hurled them headlong down, down, down, to the dungeon of hell; see, he turns to the guilty crowd on his LEFT hand; his angry countenance reveals the righteous indignation that glows in his heart. His countenance manifests that he is inexorable, and that there is now no room for prayers and tears.

Now, the sweet, mild, mediatorial hour is past--and nothing appears but the majesty and terror of the judge! Horror and darkness frown upon his brow, and vindictive lightnings flash from his eyes. And now, (Oh! who can bear the sound!) he speaks, "Depart from me, you who are cursed--into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" Oh! the cutting emphasis of every word!

Depart!

Depart from me--from me, the Author of all good, the Fountain of all good, the Fountain of all happiness. Depart, with all my heavy, all-consuming curse upon you!

Depart into fire, into eternal fire--prepared, furnished with fuel, and blown up into rage!

Prepared for the devil and his angels, once your companions in sin--and now the companions and executioners of your punishment!

Now the grand period has arrived in which the final, everlasting states of mankind are unchangeably fixed! From this all-important day--their happiness or misery runs on in one uniform, uninterrupted tenor! There is no change, no gradation--but from glory to glory--in the scale of heavenly perfection; or from gulf to gulf--in hell. This is the day in which all the schemes of Providence, carried on for thousands of years, terminate.

TIME was--but it is no more! Now all people enter upon a duration not to be measured by the revolutions of the sun, nor by days, and months, and years. Now eternity dawns--a 'day' that shall never see an 'evening'. And this terribly illustrious morning, is solemnized with the execution of the sentence. No sooner is it passed than immediately the wicked "will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life!" Matthew 25:46.

See the astonished, thunder-struck multitude on the LEFT hand, with sullen horror, and grief, and despair in their looks, writhing with agony, crying and wringing their hands, and glancing a wishful eye towards that heaven which they lost! See them, dragged away by devils to the place of execution! See, hell expands her voracious jaws, and swallows them up! And now an 'eternal farewell' to earth and all its enjoyments! Farewell to the cheerful light of the sun! Farewell to all 'hope', that sweet relief of affliction!

Heaven frowns upon them from above,

the horrors of hell spread far and wide around them,

and conscience, that never-dying worm within, preys upon their hearts.

CONSCIENCE! O you abused, mistreated power, which now sleeps in so many breasts! What severe, ample revenge will you then take upon those who now dare to abuse you!

Oh the dire reflections which MEMORY will then suggest! The remembrance of mercies abused! The remembrance of a Savior slighted! Remembrance of means and opportunities of salvation neglected and lost! This remembrance will sting the heart like a scorpion!

But O ETERNITY! ETERNITY! With what horror will your name circulate through the vaults of hell!

ETERNITY in misery! No end to pain!

No hope of an end!

Oh this ETERNITY is the hell of hell!

This ETERNITY is the parent of despair! Despair is the direst ingredient of misery, the most tormenting passion which devils feel.

But let us view a more delightful and illustrious scene! See the bright and triumphant army marching up to their eternal home, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, where they shall ever be with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4:17, as happy as their nature in its highest improvements is capable of being made!!

With what shouts of joy and triumph do they ascend! With what sublime hallelujahs do they crown their Deliverer! With what wonder and joy, with what pleasing horror, like one that has narrowly escaped some tremendous precipice--do they look back upon what they once were!

Once they were vile, guilty, depraved, condemned sinners!

Afterward they were imperfect, brokenhearted, sighing, weeping saints!

But now they are innocent, holy, happy, glorious immortals!

Now with what pleasure and rapture do they look forward through the long, long prospect of immortality, and call it their own! The duration not only of their existence--but of their happiness and glory! Oh shall any of US share in this immensely valuable privilege! How immensely transporting the thought!

Oh what miracles of power and grace, are these! But why do I darken such splendors, with words without knowledge? The language of mortals was formed for lower descriptions. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived--what God has prepared for those who love him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9.

And now when the inhabitants of OUR WORLD, for whose sake it was formed, are all removed to other regions, and it is left a wide extended desert; what remains--but that it also meet its fate? It is fit that so guilty a globe, which had been the stage of sin for so many thousands of years, and which even supported the cross on which its Maker expired--should be made a monument of the divine displeasure, and either be laid in ruins, or refined by fire.

"The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare!" 2 Peter 3:7,10.

Look! the universal blaze begins! Now stars rush from their orbits! Comets glare! The earth trembles with convulsions! All the lofty peaks of mountains thunder, and smoke, and flame and quake like Sinai, when God descended upon it to publish his fiery law! Rocks melt and run down in torrents of flame! Rivers, lakes, and oceans boil and evaporate! Sheets of fire and pillars of smoke, and insufferable thunders and lightnings burst, and bellow, and blaze, and shake the heavens from pole to pole! The whole globe is now dissolved into a shoreless ocean of liquid fire!

And where now--shall we find the places where cities stood, where armies fought, where mountains stretched their ridges, and reared their heads so high? Alas! they are all lost, and have left no trace behind them where they once stood! Where are you, oh my country? Sunk with the rest--as a drop into the burning ocean! Where now are your houses, your lands, and those earthly possessions you were once so fond of? They are nowhere to be found!

How sorry a portion for an immortal soul--is such a dying world as this!

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a view of the solemnities of the last day which our world shall see. The view has indeed been but very faint and obscure--and such will be all our views and descriptions of

it--until our eyes and our ears teach us better! Yes, brethren, these very ears that now hear my voice--shall hear the all-alarming clangor of the last trumpet, the decisive sentence from the mouth of the universal Judge, and the horrid crash of shattering worlds! These very eyes with which you now see one another--shall yet see the descending Judge, the assembled multitudes, and all the majestic phenomena of that day! And we shall not see them as indifferent spectators! No--we are as much concerned in this great final transaction. We must all appear before the judgment-seat, and receive our sentence according to the deeds done in the body.

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance--but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed!" Acts 17:30-31. And if so:

Why are we not preparing more diligently?

Why does the prospect not affect us more?

Why are the righteous not transported with unspeakable joy?

Why are the sinners in Zion not afraid?

Why are the hypocrites not filled with fearfulness? Isaiah 33:14.

Can one of you be careless from this hour--until you are in readiness for that tremendous day? Repentance is the grand preparative for this dreadful day; and the apostle mentions the final judgment as a powerful motive to repentance.

What will criminals think of repentance--when they see the Judge ascend his throne? Come, sinners, look forward and see . . .

the flaming tribunal erected,

your crimes exposed,

your doom pronounced,

and your hell begun!

See the whole world demolished, and ravaged by boundless conflagration for your sins! With these objects before you, I call you to repent! I call you! I retract my words! GOD, the great God, whom heaven and earth obey, commands you to repent!

Whatever are your characters, whether rich or poor, old or young, white or black, wherever you sit or stand, this command reaches you: "God commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed!"

You are this day firmly bound to this duty by his authority. And dare you disobey Him--with the prospect of all the dreadful solemnities of judgment before you--in so near a view? Oh! methinks I have now brought you into such a situation, that the often-repeated but hitherto neglected call to repentance will be regarded by you.

Repent you must--either upon earth or in hell. You must either spend your TIME--or your ETERNITY, in repentance. It is absolutely unavoidable. Putting it off now, does not remove the necessity--but will only render it the more bitter and severe hereafter.

Which then do you choose?

The tolerable, hopeful, medicinal repentance of the present life?

Or the intolerable, unprofitable, despairing repentance of hell?

Will you choose to spend time--or eternity in this melancholy exercise? Oh! make the choice which God, which reason, which self-interest, which common sense recommend to you! Now repent at the command of God, because "He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed!" Amen.

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