

The Final Judgment

by Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards' sermon emphasizes the certainty and righteousness of the final judgment by Jesus Christ, highlighting God's authority and the necessity for justice in the world.

Scripture: Matthew 25:31, Acts 17:31, 1 Corinthians 15:24, 2 Peter 3:7, Revelation 19:7

Topics: "Final Judgment", "Eternal Life"

Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the Final Judgment, emphasizing the righteousness of Jesus Christ as the appointed Judge. He explains how the judgment will be conducted, with the world judged according to works, leading to eternal punishment for the wicked and eternal life for the righteous. Edwards highlights the increase in misery for the wicked and happiness for the saints after judgment, culminating in the dissolution of the world by fire and the eternal glory of the redeemed.

Transcript

The Final Judgment

Or

The World Judged Righteously by Jesus Christ

Acts 17:31

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

INTRODUCTION

God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

THESE words are a part of the speech which Paul made in Mars' hill, 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 common wealth 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 Acts 17:18), 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 endeavoring to find out new things, and valued themselves greatly upon their being the authors of new discoveries, as we are informed in Acts 17:21. 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. 1:23, 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. 9:22, "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 (Acts 17:28). 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 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.

SECTION I

God is the supreme judge of the world.

I. 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, *1* 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 right 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, has 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, has a right in everything to be regarded, and to have his determinations attended to and obeyed.

God has 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 other, 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 has 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 has a right to judge their actions and conduct, and to fulfill the sanction of his law. He who has an absolute and independent right to give laws, has 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 has a right to be judge, so has he a right to be the supreme judge. And none has a right to reverse his judgments, to receive appeals from him, or to say to him, Why judgest thou thus?

II. God is, in fact the supreme judge of the world. He has power sufficient to vindicate his own right. As he has a right which cannot be disputed, so he has power which cannot be controlled. He is possessed of omnipotence, wherewith to maintain his dominion over the world. And he does 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 9:4. Wherein the enemies of God deal proudly, he is above them. He ever has acted as judge in bestowing what rewards, and inflicting what punishments, he pleased on the children of men. And so he does still. He is daily fulfilling the promises and threatenings of the law, in disposing of the souls of the children of men, and so be evermore will act.

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

First, 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 fulfillment of the law, in their reward or punishment, is made known to them and executed. This is undoubtedly done at every man's death.

Second, 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 to a further degree be fulfilled. -- But this brings me to another branch of the subject.

SECTION 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 doctrines of revelation, a doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were indeed some hints of it in the Old Testament, as in Psa. 96:13, "The Lord cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and his people with his truth." And Ecc. 12:14, "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 has 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 behavior, is a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason. Which I shall now endeavor 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.

I. 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 does 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 atheistical 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 has 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 has been so much questioned, denied, and proudly opposed! 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!

II. 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 state 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 everyone. 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 forever put to silence, and argument will be given for the saints and angels to praise God forever: Rev. 19:1, 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."

III. 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 has appointed man his end and work, must take care of the order and good government for the world, which he has 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 for confusion. It has 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), hereby 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, honored, 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!

IV. By a public and general judgment, God more fully accomplishes the reward he designs for the godly, and punishment he designs for the wicked. One part of the reward which God intends for his saints, is the honor which he intends to bestow upon them. He will honor 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 honor 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 forever. -- Which ends may be much more fully accomplished in a general, than in a particular judgment.

SECTION 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 1:11, "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 marvelous wisdom in what he determines and orders with respect to this matter. We learn,

I. 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 5:27, "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.

II. Christ has this honor 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. 2:8-12, "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 honor of arraigning all men before his throne, and judging them with respect to their eternal state! John 5:21-24.

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, Mat. 26:64, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

III. 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 honor 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 has 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 6:39, 40, chap. 5:25-31). 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. 8:23).

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.

IV. 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 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. 15:24, 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 honor of obtaining the victory, and finishing the war.

V. 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 has 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 has 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.

VI. 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 has 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 has 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 Savior, who is now my incensed Judge!

SECTION IV

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

I. 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. 4:10. And there he has 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, Mat. 16:27, "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 spoke of this appearance in magnificent terms, 2 Pet. 1:16, 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. 1:13 etc. 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 sepulcher, after his resurrection, Mat. 28:3, "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 everyone, when all shall be gathered together, shall see him, Rev. 1:7, "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.

II. 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. 15:52, "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Mat. 24:31, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." 1 Thes. 4:16, "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 water, 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 5:28, 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. 20:13, "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 Thes. 4:14, "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. 3:21, "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 vigor and vivacity, like that of those spirits that are as a flame of fire. 1 Cor. 15:43, 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 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. 15:51, 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.

III. They shall all be brought to appear before Christ, the godly being placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left; Mat. 25:31, 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 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 Savior, 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 Thes. 4:16, 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. 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

IV. The next thing will be that the books shall be opened. Rev. 20:12, "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.

First, 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. 3:16, "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 forgets any of them. Neither does 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 favored 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. Mat. 12:36, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Rom 14:12, "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 canceled 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. 20:12, "And the dead were judged out of those things that were found written in the books, according to their works." And verse 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 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. Mat. 12:37, "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. 2:23, "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 Mat. 25:42, etc. "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," etc.

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 harbored 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.

Second, 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 has 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 has 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 has stood, and ever will stand in force, as a rule of judgment, for those to whom the law was given. Mat. 5:18, "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 everyone, both righteous and wicked, whether the law stands against him, or whether he has a fulfillment of the law to show. As to the righteous, they will have fulfillment to show. They

will have it to plead, that the judge himself has fulfilled the law for them. That he has both satisfied for their sins, and fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them. Rom. 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for the 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 fulfillment 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. 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." By the gospel, of 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.

V. 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 forever 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 and 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 forever.

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 honor 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.

VI. Immediately after this, the sentence will be executed, as we are informed, Mat. 25:46, "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, honor, 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.

SECTION V

All will be done in righteousness.

CHRIST will give to every man his due, according to 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. 3:26, "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,

I. 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. Deu. 10:17, "He regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." It is impossible he should be deceived by the excuse, and false colors, 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.

II. He cannot fail of judging righteously through an unrighteous disposition. For he is infinitely just and holy in his nature. Deu. 32:4, "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.

SECTION VI

Those things which will immediately follow the day of judgment.

I. 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. 3:7, "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." Verse 10, "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." 2 Pet. 3:12, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

II. 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 connection 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. 2:19) 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. 2:4, 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. Mat. 8:29. 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. 19:7, "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 with him. Then God will have obtained the end of all the great works which he has been doing from the beginning of the world. All the designs of God will be unfolded in their events. Then his marvelous 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 forever and ever.

SECTION 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,

First, that God suffers the wicked to live and prosper in

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