

The Judgment Day: A Solemn, Tremendous and Glorious Scene of the Universal Judgment

by Samuel Davies

The Judgment Day is a solemn and tremendous scene where God will judge the world in righteousness, and all men will be held accountable for their actions.

Duration: 1:05:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:40-42, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 25:31, Romans 2:16, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8

Topics: "Judgment Day"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher directs the audience's attention to the solemn and glorious scene of the Universal Judgment. He describes the destruction of the world and the agonizing convulsions of nature in its last moments. The preacher emphasizes the insignificance of earthly possessions and the sorrowful fate of a dying world. He also highlights the righteous indignation and terrifying presence of the judge, who condemns the guilty with no room for prayers or tears. The sermon concludes by acknowledging the difficulty of fully comprehending the grandeur and magnitude of the last day, but assures the audience that they will soon witness these majestic wonders firsthand.

Transcript

The Judgment Day by Samuel Davies Acts 17 30 and 31 And at times of this ignorance God winked at, But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, Because he is appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness By that man whom he hath ordained, Whereof he is given assurance unto all men, And that he has raised him from the dead. The present state is the infancy of human nature, All the events of time, even those that make such noise, And determine the fate of kingdoms, are but the little affairs of children. But if we look forwards and trace human nature to maturity, We meet with events vast, interesting, and majestic, And such as nothing but divine authority can render credible to us Who are so apt to judge a thing by what we see.

To one of these things I would direct your attention this day. I mean the solemn, tremendous, and glorious seeing of the universal judgment. You have sometimes seen a stately building in ruins.

Come now and view the ruins of an demolished world. You have often seen a feeble mortal struggling in the agonies of death, And his shattered frame dissolved. Come now and view universal nature severely laboring and agonizing In her last convulsions, and her well-compacted system dissolved.

You have heard of earthquakes here and there that have laid Lisbon, Palermo, and a few other cities in ruins. Come now and feel the tremors and convulsions of the whole globe That blend cities and countries, oceans and continents, Mountains, plains, and valleys in one promiscuous heap. You have a thousand times beheld the moon walking in brightness, And the sun shining in its strength.

Now look and see the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. It is our lot to live in an age of confusion, blood, and slaughter, An age in which our attention is engaged by the clash of arms, The clangor of trumpets, the roar of artillery, And the dubious fate of kingdoms. But draw off your thoughts from these objects for an hour, And fix them on objects more solemn and interesting.

Such a scene there certainly is before us. For Paul tells us that God has given assurance to all men That he will judge the world in righteousness By that man whom he hath ordained, and that is resurrection. The resurrection of him who is God and man is a demonstrative proof of it.

My text is the conclusion of Paul's defense or sermon Before the famous court of Areopagus, An alerted and philosophical city of Athens. In this august and polite 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 and 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 peculiarities 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 some mocked, And others put it off to another hearing.

We will hear the again of this matter. In these dark times of ignorance, Which preceded the publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink or connive at the idolatry And various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world. That is, he seemed to overlook, or 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 connive At 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. This connection implies, He now commandeth all men to repent, Because he hath appointed a day for judging all men. And surely the prospect of a 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 a reason for it. This Paul intimates, He now commandeth all men to repent, Because he hath given assurance to all men, That he has appointed a day to judge the world.

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 general resurrection, That grant preparative for the judgment.

It is an incontestable proof of his divine mission, For God will never work so unprecedented a miracle in favor of an imposter. It is also an authentic attestation of all our Lord's claims, And he expressly claimed the authority of supreme judge Is 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 hath highly exalted him. Philippians 2 verses 8 and 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 all judgment is given to the Son, 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 God and man, Emmanuel, God with us, And 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 we have seen, nothing that we have heard, Nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time Can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and grovelling, All is faint and obscure, That ever the sun shone upon, When compared with the grand phenomena of that day.

And 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. Ere 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 convention of all the sons of 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 God is judge himself. Yet Christ tells us a father judges no man, But has committed all judgment to the son, And that he has given him authority to

execute judgment, Because he is the son of man.

John 5, 22 and 27 It is therefore Christ Jesus, God-man, as I observed, Who shall sustain this high character, And for the reasons already alleged, It is most fit it should be devolved upon him. Being 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 august 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 becomes the dignity of his person and office. He will shine in all the uncreated glories of the Godhead, In all the gentle glories of a perfect man. His attendance will add a dignity to the grand appearance, And the sympathy of nature will increase the solemnity and terror of the day.

Let his own word describe him. The son of man shall come in his glory, And in the glory of his father, And all the holy angels with him, And then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. Matthew 25, verse 31 Matthew 16, verse 27 The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven With his mighty angels in flaming fire, Taking vengeance on them that know not God, And that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1, 7 and 8 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. For those that sleep in Jesus, says Paul, Will God bring with him. 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 14 The grand imagery in Daniel's vision is applicable to this day, And perhaps to this it primarily refers.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, Or rather set up, And the Ancient of Days did sit, Whose garments was white as snow, And the hair of his head like the pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, And his wills as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, And came forth from before him.

Thousands, thousands ministered unto him, And ten thousands times ten thousands stood before him. Daniel 7, 9 and 10 Perhaps our Lord 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. Clothed with a garment down to the foot, And gird about the breasts with a golden girdle.

His head and his hair white like wool, As white as snow. His eyes as a flame of fire, His feet like undefined brass as if they burned in a furnace. His voice as the sound of many waters, And his countenance as the sun shining in his strength.

Revelation 1, 13 and so on. Another image of inimitable majesty and terror, The same writer gives us when he says, I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, And there was found no place for them. Astonishing! What an image is this! The stable earth and heaven cannot bear the majesty and terror of his look.

They fly away affrightened, 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.

Revelations 20, verse 11. This is the judge before whom we must stand, And this is the manner of his appearance. But is this the babe of Bethlehem that lay and wept in the manger? Is this the supposed son of the carpenter that despised Galilean? Is this the man of sorrows? Is this he that was arrested, was condemned, was buffeted, Was spit upon, was crowned with thorns, Was executed as a slave and a criminal upon the cross? Yes, it is he, the very same Jesus of Nazareth.

But oh, how changed! How deservedly exalted! Let heaven and earth congratulate his advancement. Now let his enemies appear and show their usual contempt and malignity. Now, Pilate, condemn the king of the Jews as an usurper.

Now, ye Jews, raise a clamor. Crucify him! Crucify him! Now, ye deists and infidels, Dispute his divinity and the truth of his religion if you can. Now, you hypocritical Christians, Try to impose upon him with your idle pretenses.

Now despise his grace, laugh at his threatenings, And make light of his displeasure if you are able. Ah, now their courage fails, And terror surrounds them like armed men. Now they hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, And say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, And from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the Lord that once bled as a sacrifice for sin Now appears in all the terrors of a lion, And the great day of his wrath has come, And who shall be able to stand? Revelation 6 verse 15 O 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! But alas, it cannot be! 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 the then generation. And how shall they be roused from their long sleep of thousands of years? Why, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, With the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

1 Thessalonians 4 verse 16 The trumpet shall sound, And they that 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 verses 51 and 52 Now all the millions of mankind, Or 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 underground begin to stir, To rouse in the 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, Whether they were blown away by winds or washed by waters. 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 in fields Which fattened with their blood, Produced a thousand harvests, And now produce a crop of men. See a succession of thousands of years Rising in crowds from graveyards, Round the places where they once attended In order to prepare for this decisive day. Nay, graves yawn and swarms burst into life 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 men Starting 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. What vast multitudes that 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 Goliaths, the Anakims, And the other giants of ancient times, And now the millions of infants, Those little particles of life, Start up at once, perhaps in full maturity, Or perhaps in the lowest class of mankind, Dwarfs of immortality. The dead, small and great, Will arise to stand before God, And the sea shall give up the dead which were in it, Revelation 20, 12, and 13.

Now the many that sleep in the dust Shall awake and come forth, Some to everlasting life, And some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12, 2. Now the hour is come when all that are in the grave Shall hear the voice of the Son of God, And shall come forth, These that have done good to the resurrection of life, And these that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. John 5, verse 28.

Though after our skin worms destroy this body, Yet in our flesh we shall see God, Whom we shall see for ourselves, And these eyes shall behold him, And not another. Job 19, 26, 27. Then this corruptible body shall put on incorruption, And this mortal shall put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15, 23. As to 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 a heavier load of misery. Their strength will be but mere strength To suffer a horrid capacity of greater pain. The immortality of the righteous Will be the duration of their happiness.

But that of the wicked, of their misery, Their immortality, the highest privilege of their nature, Will be their heaviest curse. And 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 those 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 material bodies. And malice, rage, despair, and all the infernal passions Will lower in their countenance 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 shocking forms That will be everlasting engines of torture to them As they once were instruments of sin. But oh, with what joy will the souls of the righteous Return to their old habitations In which they once served their God with, Though feeble endeavors, Now so gloriously repaired and improved.

How will they congratulate the resurrection Of their old companions from their long sleep and 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 is come, the judgment seat is erected, The dead are raised, and what follows? Why, the universal convention of all the sons of men 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 the saints shall be caught up together In the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

For Thessalonians 4.17 That the air will be the place of judicature, perhaps, May be intimated when our Lord is represented As coming into clouds and sitting upon a cloudy throne. These expressions can hardly be understood literally, For clouds which consist of vapors And rarefied particles of water Seem very improper materials for a chariot of state Or a throne of judgment. But they may very properly intimate That Christ shall 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 wandering and gazing world.

To this upper region 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. The Son of Man, when He comes in the clouds of heaven With power and great glory, Shall send forth His angels With the great sound of the trumpet, And they shall gather together His elect From the four winds And from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24.30 and 31 Their ministry also extends to the wicked Whom they will drag away to judgment, And execution, and separate from the righteous.

For in the end of the world, says Christ, The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, And they shall gather out of His kingdom All things that offend, And them that work iniquity, And shall cast Him into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13.40 to 42 What an august 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, Choosing them out from among the crowd of the ungodly, And bearing them aloft on their wings To meet the Lord in the air, While the wretched crowd look and gaze And stretch their hands And whirl 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 And swarthy sons of Africa And the savages of America mingle together. Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans, The learned and the ignorant, Kings and subjects, rich and poor, Free and bond, form one promiscuous crowd. Now all the vast armies that conquered or fell Under Xerxes, Darius, Alexander, Caesar, Scipio, Tamerlane, Marlboro, 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 assembly. And how inconceivably great must the number be When the inhabitants of but one country are met 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 rendezvous, How astonishing and vast would be the multitude! But what is even this vast multitude 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 a place of judgment, For this globe would not be sufficient For such a multitude to stand upon. In that prodigious assembly, My brethren, you and I must mingle.

And we shall not be lost in the crowd, Nor escape the notice of our judge, But as I will be as particularly fixed on every one of us, As though there were but one before him. To increase the number, And add a majesty and terror to the assembly, The fallen angels also make their appearance at the bar. This they have long expected with horror As a period when their consummate misery is to commence.

When Christ, in the form of a servant, Exercised a godlike 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, Art thou come to torment us before the time? Matthew 13 Matthew 8 verse 29 That is to say, we expect thou will at last appear to torment us, But we did not expect thy coming so. Agreeable to this, Peter tells us, God spared not the angels that sinned, But cast them down to hell, And delivered them as prisoners In the chains of darkness, To be reserved unto judgment.

2 Peter 2 verse 4 To the same purpose Jude speaks, The angels which kept not their first estate, But left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, To the judgment of the great day. Jude 6 What horribly majestic figures will these be? And what a dreadful appearance will they make at the bar? Angels and archangels, Thrones and dominions, And principalities and powers, Blasted, stripped of their primeval glories, And lying in ruins, Yet majestic even in ruins, Gigantic forms of terror and deformity, Great though degraded, Horribly illustrious, Angels, fallen gods, Undeified and deposed. 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. When all nations are gathered before the Son of Man, Himself is told us he shall separate one from another, As a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, But the goats on the left. Matthew 25, 32 and 33 And oh, what strange separations are now made! What multitudes at 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, In place 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 the judge who smiles upon them! What connections are now broken! What hearts torn asunder! What intimate companions! What dear relations parted forever! Neighbor from neighbor, Masters from servants, 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 that lived in the same country, Who sustained the same denomination, Who worshipped in the same place, Who lived under one roof, Who lay in the same womb, And sucked the same breasts, Must now part forever. And is there no separation likely to be made then In our families or in our congregation? Is it likely we shall all be placed in a body upon 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 revelation, I see the drunkard, The swearer, The whoremonger, 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 call not upon God's name, And whole nations that forgot 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 forebode 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, sobering, and godly in the world.

These are some of the principal liniments of their character Who shall have their safe and honorable station At the right hand of the sovereign judge. And is not this a prevailing character of some of you? I hope and believe it is, Through the medium of Scripture revelation. Then 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 a 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 that last day. If I be so happy as to obtain some humble place there, I shall look out for 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 unexpected separations Will then be made, I tremble As I should miss some of you there. Are you not afraid lest you should miss some of your friends Or some of your families there? Or that you should then see them 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 a faithful part towards me While conversant with you or under your care, I might now have had my place among the saints. Oh, how could you bear such a significant piercing look From a child, a servant, or a 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 verse 16 All the works of all the sons of men will then be tried. For St. Paul says, We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, That every man may receive the things done in the body. According to what he has done, Whether it be good or whether it be evil.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 10 John in his vision saw the dead judged according to their works. Revelation 20, 12 and 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. God says Solomon will bring every work into judgment. And every secret thing, Whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Ecclesiastes 12, 14 And though we are too apt to think our words are free, He that is to be our judge has told us That for every idle word which men shall speak, They shall give an account and a day of judgment. For by thy words as well as thy actions Thou shalt be justified. And by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Matthew 12, 36 and 37 What strange discoveries will this trial make? What noble dispositions that never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes? What generous purposes crushed an embryo for want of power to execute them? What pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty Are 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, 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? Sure, the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell Or the biography of devils. Then the mask of dissimulation 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 the 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. It may not the prospect of such a discovery 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 they were now all published, Even in the small circle of your acquaintance? How then can you bear to have them all fully exposed before God, angels, and men? Will it not confound you with shame, And make you objects of everlasting contempt to all the 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 nature, or conscience, is a universal rule, And universally known, or at least knowable, by all the sons of men, heathens, and Mohammedans, as well as Jews and Christians. And therefore all mankind shall be judged by this rule.

This the consciences of all now forebodes. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, These not having the law are a law unto themselves, Which show the works of the law written in their hearts, Their conscience also bearing witness in their thoughts, Demean while accusing, or else excusing one another. Romans 2 verse 14 and 15 By this rule their consciences now acquit or condemn them, Because they know that by this rule they shall then be judged.

This seems to be a kind of innate pre-sentiment of human nature. As the heathens were invincibly ignorant of every rule but this, They shall be judged by this only. But as to those parts of the world that enjoyed or might enjoy the advantages of revelation, Whether by tradition with the anti-Mosaic world, Or in the writings of Moses and the prophets with the Jews, Or in the clear 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 more 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 the law. And as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel. Romans 2 verse 12 and 16 If I had not come and spoken unto them, says the blessed Jesus, They would not have had sin.

That is, they would not have had sin so aggravated, Or they would not have had the particular sin of unbelief and rejecting the Messiah. But now they have no cloak for their sin. John 15 verse 22 That is, now when they have had such abundant conviction, they are utterly inexcusable.

This, he says, is a condemnation. That is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, That light has come into the world. And men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

John 3 verse 19 That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, Neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, Observe, ignorance is no sufficient excuse, Except when invincible, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.

Luke 12 verse 47 and 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 would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah Than for Tyre and Sidon, Than for those places that enjoyed the advantages of his ministry and misimproved it. Matthew 11 verse 21 and 24 Whether upon these principles sinners among us have not reason to expect They will obtain a horrid precedence among the millions 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, Open and read for the direction of the judges, And sentences passed according to them. In allusion to this custom, Daniel and Vision saw the judgment seat, And the books were opened.

Daniel 7 verse 10 And John had the same representation made to him. I saw the dead, he says, small and great stand before God, And the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is a book of life.

And the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, According to their works. Revelation 20 verse 12 Should we pursue this significant allusion, we may say, Then will be opened the book of the law of nature, And mankind will be tried according to its precepts, And doomed according to its sentence. This is a plain and vast volume, Open and legible now to all that can read their own hearts, That have eyes to look round upon the works of God, Which show His glory in their duty, And who have ears to hear the lectures, Which the sun and moon and all the works of creation Read to them night and day.

Then, too, will be opened the book of Scripture, Revelation, and 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, And that are recorded all the thoughts, words, actions, Both good and bad, of all the sons of men. And now the immense account shall be publicly read Before the assembled universe. Then, likewise, as a counterpart to this, Will be opened the book of conscience, Conscience which, though unnoticed, Writes our whole history as with an iron pin And the point of a diamond.

Then also we are expressly told Will be opened the book of life, Revelation 20, verse 12, In which are contained all the names Of all the heirs of heaven. 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 Firstborn, Who are written in heaven, Or as denizens of that blessed city.

These, having been all prepared by his grace in time, Shall be admitted into the new Jerusalem In that day of the Lord. Further, 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 will be a witness against the guilty.

I will come near to you to judgment, And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, And against the swearers, And against the adulterers, And against those that oppress, And against those that fear me not, Saith the Lord of hosts, Malachi 3.5. And he will, no doubt, be a witness for his people, And attest their sincere piety, Their interest in Christ, And those good dispositions or actions Which were known only to him. Angels also, that minister 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 evidence is now so often suppressed, Will then have full scope, and shall be regarded.

Whom conscience condemns, A righteous judge will also condemn. For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, And knoweth all things. 1 John 3 verse 20.

Knoweth 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 inanimated 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 stone shall cry out of the wall, And a beam out of the timber shall answer it. Habakkuk 2.11. The rust of their gold and

silver Shall be a witness against them, And shall eat their flesh as it were fire.

James 5 verse 3. Nay, the heavens shall reveal their iniquity, And the earth shall rise up against them. Job 20.27. Heaven and earth will be called to witness That life and death were set before them. Deuteronomy 30 verse 19.

And now they will give in their evidence That they chose death. Thus God and all his creatures, Heaven and earth and hell, Rise up against them, accuse and condemn them. And will not sinners 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. O tremendous thought! That friends should inform and witness against friend, Parents against children, And children against parents, Ministers against their people, And people against their ministers. Alas, what a confounding testimony against each other Must those give in who are now sinning together.

Thus a 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's 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 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 sentence. Heaven and earth are all silent and attentive, While the judge, with smiles in his face And a voice sweeter than the heavenly music, Turns to the glorious company on his right hand, And pours all the joys of heaven into their souls, And that transporting sentence Of which he has graciously left us a copy.

Come, ye blessed of my Father, Inherit the kingdom prepared for you From the foundation 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 for ever.

There was nothing they desired so much As a 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 And blessed of his Father. They were all poor in spirit, Most of them poor in this world, And all sensible of their unworthiness.

How agreeable 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 his 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 a very thought overwhelms us, Methinks our feeble frames must be unable To bear up under the ecstatic hope Of a so sweetly oppressive a blessedness.

O if this be our sentence in that day, It is no matter what we suffer In the intermediate space, That sentence would compensate for all And annihilate the sufferings of ten thousand years. But hark! another sentence breaks From the mouth of the angry judge Like a 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 fiat produces worlds out of nothing, He who can remand ten thousand worlds Into nothing at a frown, He whose thunder quelled the resurrection 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, His angry countenance discovers The righteous indignation that glows in his breast, His countenance bespeaks him exorable, And that there is now no room For prayers and tears. Now the sweet mild mediatorial hour has passed, And nothing appears but the majesty And terror of the judge.

Horror and darkness frown upon his brow, And vindictive lightning flashes from his eyes. And now who can bear the sound? He speaks, depart from me, Ye cursed into everlasting fire, Prepared for the devil and his angels. O 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 everlasting, Everlasting 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 settled.

From this all-important era, Their happiness or misery runs on, In one uniform, uninterrupted tenor. No change, no gradation, But from glory to glory, In a scale of 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 is no more. Now all the sons of men 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 terrible, illustrious morning Is solemnized with the execution Of the sentence. No sooner is it past, Than immediately the wicked go away Into everlasting punishment, But the righteous into life eternal. Matthew 25, 46 See the astonished, Thunderstruck 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, 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 heaven, Farewell to hope, That sweet relief of affliction. Heaven frowns upon them from above, The whores of hell spread far and wide Around them, And conscience within Preys upon their hearts. Conscience, O thou abused, Exasperated power, That now sleepest in so many breasts, What severe, ample revenge Wilt thou then take upon those That now dare

to do thee violence? O the dire reflections Which memory will then suggest, The remembrance of mercies abused, Of a saviour slighted, 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 thy name circulate Through the vaults of hell? Eternity and misery, No end to pain, No hope of an end, O this is the hell of hell, This is the parent of despair, Despair 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. For Thessalonians 4, 17, As happy as their nature And 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 ones that has narrowly escaped Some tremendous precipice, Do they look back upon What they once were, Once mean, guilty, depraved, Condemned sinners.

Afterward, imperfect, broken-hearted, Sighing, weeping saints, But now 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? O, shall any of us share In this immensely valuable privilege, How immensely transporting the thought! O, what exploits, 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. Eye hath not seen, ear has not heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things that God has laid up For them that 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 is also To meet its fate? It is fit so guilty a globe That has 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. And see, the universal blaze begins, The heavens pass away with a great noise, The elements melt with fervent heat, The earth and the works that are therein Are burnt up. 2 Peter 3.10 Now stars rush from their orbits, Comets glare, The earth trembles with convulsions, The Alps, the Andes, And all the lofty peaks Or long extended ridges of mountains Burst out into so many burning etnas, Or thunder and lightning, 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 Outrageous and insufferable thunders And lightnings burst and bellow and blaze, And evolve the atmosphere 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 on high? Alas, they are all lost, And have left no trace behind them Where they once stood.

Where art thou, O my country, Sunk with arrest as a drop Into the burning ocean? Where now are your houses, Your lands, and those earthly possessions You once were so fond of? They are nowhere to be found. How sorry a portion for an immortal mind Is such a dying world as this! And O, 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 Till our eyes and our ears Teach us better.

Through these avenues You will at length Receive your instructions. Yes, brethren, Those 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 falling 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 so much concerned In this great transaction As any of the children of men. We must all appear Before the judgment seat, And receive our sentence According to the deeds done in the body.

And if so, what are we doing That we are not more diligently preparing? What does not the prospect affect us more? Why does it not transport the righteous With joy unspeakable and full of glory? 1 Peter 1.8. And why are not the sinners In Zion afraid? Why does not fearfulness surprise The hypocrites? Isaiah 33.14. Can one of you be careless from this hour Till you are in readiness For that tremendous day? What do the sinners among you Now think of repentance? Repentance is a grand preperative For this awful day. And the apostle, as I observed, Mentions a final judgment in my text As a powerful motive to repentance. And what will the criminal 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 a 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 the words. God, the great God, Whom heaven and earth obey, Commands you to repent. Whatever be your characters, Whether rich or poor, Old or young, White or black, Wherever you sit or stand, This command reaches you.

For God now commandeth all men Everywhere to repent. You are this day firmly bound To this duty by His authority. And dare you disobey With the prospect of all the awful Solemnities of judgment before you And so near of you? O, 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? O, 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 has appointed a day In which He will judge the world In righteousness by that man Whom He hath ordained, Of which He has given you all Full assurance, And that He raised Him from the dead.

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