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Go... Teach all Nations....*Matt. xxviii. 19.*

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SERMON XXVI.

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CHARLESTON, S. CAROLINA.

THE PURE GOSPEL REJECTED BY THE PERISHING.

1 COR. I. 18.—*For the preaching of the cross is, to them that perish, foolishness.*

IN the Christian revelation, there is an evident purpose of infinite wisdom, that in all the provisions for man's salvation, his moral agency should be left free and uncontrolled. Instead of accommodation to human prejudices, there is ample scope for captious objections. And if additional proof were needed, of the divine origin of the Bible, it would be found in this characteristic. Were it a system agreeable to the narrow views, in unison with the selfish feelings, and gratifying to the depraved taste of human nature, it would more resemble the fabrication of man, than the workmanship of God. But as the current of its doctrines is so entirely opposed to our natural inclinations, as to render a moral renovation indispensable to a perception of the glory of revealed truth; all such ground of skepticism is removed.

Thus the obscurities and difficulties of revelation are admirably adapted to exhibit human character, and constitute this state of existence a real probation. For if the light of truth came upon the mind with resistless energy, and the operations of the divine government were clearly disclosed; if the motives and designs of infinite wisdom were fully explained, and the realities of the spiritual world completely laid open to view; one principal aim of this dispensation would be frustrated. On the one hand, there would be no field for the exercise of faith and humble confidence on the part of Christians; and thus a precious test of their submission and obedience would be destroyed. On the other, there could not be a full disclosure of the true feelings of the unrenewed heart. Because, as all would be evident as the noon-day sun, there would remain no choice in the matter of embracing the truth—no means of evincing whether its reception were cordial or compulsory.

In this respect, there is displayed a matchless skill, as well as a gracious

SERMON XXVII.

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THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

HEBREWS, IX. 29.—*After this the Judgment.*

WHILST another year is ending, and time itself, as it respects us, is fast hastening to its close, the question very naturally arises, *What shall come after death?* The voice of inspiration replies, *After this the Judgment.* There is no need of entering upon a laboured proof of the doctrine so plainly declared, *That there will be a day of Judgment for mankind.* It is what seems written by the finger of God himself upon the consciences of men. The impression is nearly universal, with Pagans and Mahomedans, as well as Jews and Christians, that *every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* This impression is strengthened by a view of the very unequal and indiscriminate allotments of the present life. Here the virtuous are often the objects of hatred and relentless persecution. Here the man of ambition and dark intrigue, circumvents and treads down his more honest rivals. Here Providence often afflicts even the most pious; while the licentious, and proud, and oppressive, are, perhaps, suffered to enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. Now we believe, assuredly, that "God is just;" and we infer, that he will so exhibit himself by another and more equal distribution of his favours and frowns. We conclude with the wise man, "that God shall judge both the righteous and the wicked." Conscience and reason, then, unite with revelation, in saying, that "God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness." No language can be plainer, and no event more reasonably anticipated.

With this absolute certainty before us, then, of a judgment for all mankind, it would be unnatural—it would betray awful insensibility to eternal concerns, not to inquire with all seriousness—

When will this universal judgment take place? What objects is it designed to accomplish? What connexion will it have with our future and eternal condition? We inquire then,

I. *When will the universal Judgment take place?*

The precise time, God has wisely concealed from every intelligent creature. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man. No; not the angels that are

in heaven." But the text speaks of it, in general terms, as that which is to take place *after our death*. Other passages are somewhat more explicit, as to the time. The apostle Peter declares, "The heavens and the earth which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against *the day of judgment*, and perdition of ungodly men." According to this account of the judgment, it will occur at the same time with the destruction of the world; "when," as the same apostle declares, "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." Paul gives a similar account of the *time*, as he comforts the church at Thessalonica, under persecution, with the prospect of the judgment, "when 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." Indeed, if God is to "judge the whole world in righteousness," what other occasion would seem so proper, as when the last of our race have finished their work on the earth, and the world itself is about to be destroyed? Would it not appear most suitable, that the public and final decision of our destiny, should immediately succeed the winding up of this world's drama?—the termination of all earthly allotments? When, if not at that deeply interesting crisis, will all things be ready for the great trial? *The final judgment, then, will take place after our death, and at the end of the world.* We next inquire,

II. *What are the objects, which the Judgment is designed to accomplish?*

On this point, it becomes creatures of yesterday to speak with profound humility, and especially to beware of contradicting what is revealed. The objects which Jehovah will accomplish by the universal judgment, are unquestionably vast and momentous, beyond all conception. Yet some of them are obvious to reason, or are plainly revealed.

Every person has experienced inconvenience and perplexity from the circumstance, that the real characters of men, in the present life, are but partially disclosed. Much the larger portion of human actions pass unobserved by the world; or the motives which prompt them are concealed. One design of the judgment, then, is to uncover these hidden springs, and lay open every dark retreat of human conduct. We are told, "there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed;" that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;" that he "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart."

Another design of the judgment, is publicly to assign to men their proper deserts. This, we have before suggested, is not done on the earth. "All things here come alike to all." "There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." But the future judgment is characterized, as the day of "revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" "in the which he will

judge the world in righteousness ;” and will “ render to every man according to his deeds.” The mystery involved in the prosperity of the wicked, and in the unequal allotments, which have here marked the dispensations of Providence, will then cease for ever ; and it will then be seen and felt, that every one is treated according to the strictest principles of wisdom and justice.

Another special design of the judgment, is to manifest and gloriously exalt the perfections of Jehovah. Revelation has indeed proclaimed his perfections, in language which need not be misunderstood. But his providence has often interposed a cloud between them and the eyes of men. We do not comprehend the wisdom of present occurrences. We see not the end from the beginning. A complete disclosure of both, will show to the universe the deep counsels of God, and the consistent and benevolent character of all his operations. He will then appear in the greatness of his *power*, and *majesty*—as he summons the dead from their graves, and folds up the earth and the heavens, like a decayed garment, to be laid aside. He will then appear in the glory of his *justice*, his *holiness*, and his *truth*,—while he examines, before his dread tribunal, the risen and assembled millions of our race, and renders to every one according to his works. All his perfections will then be illustriously displayed ; for, says the apostle, “ He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”

But this glory of the Divinity is specially to shine forth in the person of the Son. He it was, that “ being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became “ obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God 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.” Accordingly, “ the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” It is the *Son* who will come “ in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory” ; whom “ every eye shall see ;” and who, “ in his own glory, and in the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels,” shall “ judge the world in righteousness.” Then will he who humbled himself, and “ became obedient unto death,” be publicly recognised as “ the Mighty God,” “ by whom, and for whose pleasure, all things are, and were created.” Then will “ every tongue confess that he is Lord.” The conviction will then be universal, “ that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.” This leads us to inquire,

III. *What connexion will the Judgment have with our future and eternal condition ?*

Here let us not indulge in vain speculations, but examine simply the word of God. According to the Scriptures, the judgment will result in assigning to men *very different allotments*. It will recognise among them

two entirely different and opposite classes of character. One of these classes, which the Bible denominates "the righteous," will be graciously acquitted by the Judge, and publicly treated as his friends. The other, comprising all the impenitent, will be as publicly condemned, and driven from his presence. They "will have judgment without mercy." Such is plainly the account which Christ and the sacred writers have given of the final awards to the righteous and the wicked. We have the account in detail. Says the Saviour himself, "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And again; "The hour is coming, in the which 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*." Thus broad and fearful is the discrimination which the great day will make between the righteous and the wicked. So entirely different are the awards in reserve for the two different classes of mankind. The difference will be great, as between holiness and sin; between cheerful submission to the will and providence of God, and unyielding rebellion against him; between cordial faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and wilful rejection of the only Saviour; between the splendour and joy of the celestial Paradise, and the gloominess and misery of hell. No wonder, then, that "as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." There will, indeed, be fearful reason for "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," with those who shall then "see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out."

We are not to forget, my hearers, that these different awards of the judgment day will be *irreversible* and literally *endless*. All admit this conclusion, with respect to the *righteous*. But if the righteous are *finally acquitted* at the judgment, so are the wicked *finally condemned*. If the righteous are said to enter into "*life eternal*," so are the wicked to "go away into *everlasting punishment*." The Scriptures say not one word of any reprieve from this condemnation, or of any other period of merciful visitation. But they close with the most solemn assurance, that, from that awful day, he that is unjust shall be unjust still; and he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; and he that is holy shall be holy still. Other passages, of similar import, might be quoted: but if men will pour contempt on a single declaration of Jehovah

—if they will *make God a liar*—they would not be persuaded, though his voice from the heavens were a thousand times repeated. And *because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*, most justly may he send them *strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, and be damned.*

I have thus endeavoured, with much brevity, to give a scriptural view of the final Judgment. On a subject so tremendously awful, I have chosen to present simply God's testimony. A practical inference from the whole is,—that the present life must be regarded as probationary. We are living here as responsible agents, continually adding to the number of actions, for which we must give account to God. How solemnly interesting, then, is this scene of our earthly pilgrimage! How inexpressibly valuable is time! How infinitely precious are the means of grace!—particularly those invitations of mercy, which meet us in the word of God, and address us from the sacred desk.

You, my fellow sinners, are the very individuals who must stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. You must mingle in that vast multitude, which the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall assemble. And when your characters are all laid open, you must pass off to the right hand, or to the left, accordingly as it shall appear, that you have repented, and believed on the Son of God, or have neglected this great salvation. And are you diligently preparing for that day? Are you working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Are you *agonizing* to enter in at the strait gate? Are you escaping for your life?

Fellow mortals, your time of preparation may be far more brief than you now think. A few, *very few* more opportunities for prayer, and reconciliation with God, and your account is sealed up. While you hesitate, the recording angel may be writing your condemnation. In such circumstances, what are worldly honours, or wealth, or all your hopes of enjoyment here? The life, the *eternal life* of the *soul*, is the *one thing needful*—the *only* thing really important. You will realize this truth, when the last trumpet is sounding through the universe, and, with increasing agony or or ecstasy, millions of ages after the final sentence is pronounced. O, then, consider it *now*. Prepare for that judgment, *now*. To-morrow! where is it? Repent *to-morrow*! You may have far other work to do. God, and conscience, and your immortal interests plead, “*To-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.” *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. For he cometh, for he cometh, to judge the world, in righteousness to judge the earth, and the people with his truth.*