

LECTURE LXXI.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT AND ETERNAL LIFE.

SYLLABUS.

See Conf. of Faith, ch. 33. Matt. ch. xxv ; Jno. ch. v ; 2 Thess. i : 7, 10 ; Rev. xx : 12 to end.

1. What are God's purposes in holding a final universal Judgment? And what the proofs that it will occur?

Turretin, Loc. xx, Qu. 6. Ridgley, Qu. 88. Davies' Sermon on Judgment. Hodge Theol. Vol. iii, p. 844.

2. What will be the time, place, and accessory circumstances?

Dick, Lect. 83. Knapp, § 155, and above authorities.

3. Who will be the Judge? In what sense will the saints be His assessors?

Ridgley, as above.

4. Who will be judged? And for what

Ridgley and Turretin as above.

5. By what rule? What the respective Sentences?

See same authorities.

6. What will be the nature of the reward of the Righteous?

Same authorities, especially Dick, Lect. 83. Turretin, Qu. 8, 10, 11, 12, 13. Knapp, § 159, 160. Young's Last Day. Hill, bk. v, ch. 8. Hodge Theol. Vol. iii. p. 855.

IT might seem that the purposes of God's righteousness and government might, at first view, be sufficiently satisfied by a final distribution of rewards and punishments, to men, as they successively passed out of this life. But His declarative glory

1. Objects of General Judgment.

requires not only this, but a more formal, forensic act, by which His righteous, holy, and merciful dealing shall be collectively displayed before the Universe. For His creatures, both angels and men, are finite, and would remain forever in ignorance of a great part of His righteous dispensation, unless they received this formal publication. By bringing all His subjects (at least of this province of His Universe) together, and displaying to all, the conduct and doom of all, He will silence every cavil, and compel every one to justify Him in all His dealings.

But more than this : man is, during all his probationary state, a sensuous being. So that he certainly, if not angels, is powerfully actuated by many motives arising out of a judgment, to shun sin, and seek after righteousness. The strict account, the prompt and irrevocable sentence pronounced upon it, the publication of his sins, secret and open, to all the world, the accessories of grandeur and awe which will attend the last award, all appeal to his nature, as a social and corporeal creature, arousing conscience, fear, hope, shame of exposure, affection for fellow-men, and giving substance and reality to the doctrine of future rewards, in a way which could not be felt, if there were no judgment day. But, as was remarked concerning the death

of the saints; if any benefit is to be realized from the certain prospect of an event, the event must be certain.

Several arguments have been announced by theologians to show that reason might anticipate a general judgment. (a). From the necessity of some means to readjust the inequalities between men's fates in this life and their merits. (b). From the terrors of man's own guilty conscience. (c). From the pagan myths concerning future Judges, *Rhamnusia*, *Eacus*, *Minos*, *Rhadamanthus*. But these are rather evidences of future rewards and punishments, than of their distribution in the particular forensic form of a general judgment. Reason can offer no more than a probable evidence of the latter; and this evidence is best seen from the objects which God secures by a judgment, when considered in the light of these convictions. So far as God Himself is concerned in the satisfaction of the attributes of justice in His own breast, it would be enough that He should see for Himself, each man's whole conduct and merits, and assign each one, at such time and place as He please, the adequate rewards. But reason and conscience make a judgment probable, because they obviously indicate the above valuable ends to be subserved by it. For it enables God, not only to right all the inequalities of His temporal providence, and to sanction the verdicts of man's conscience, but to show all this to His kingdom, to the glory of His grace and holiness; to unmask secret sin when He punishes it; to stop the mouths of the accusers of His people while He reveals and rewards their secret graces and virtues; and to apply to the soul, while on earth, the most pungent *stimuli* to obedience.

But this is more clearly the doctrine of Revelation. It would indeed be inaccurate to apply to a general judgment every thing which is said in the Bible about God's judgment: as is done to too great an extent by some writers. For this word is sometimes used for God's government in general (John v : 22) for a command or precept, (Ps. xix : 9;) sometimes for God's chastisements (1 Pet. iv : 17,) sometimes for His vengeance, (Ps. cxlix : 9;) sometimes for the attribute of righteousness, (Ps. lxxii : 2, or lxxxix : 14;) sometimes for a special sentence pronounced. But the following passages may be said to have more or less of a proper application to the general judgment, and from them it will be learned that this has been the doctrine of the Church from the earliest ages, viz; Jude 14; Eccles. xii : 14; Ps. 1; 3-6, 21; possibly Ps. xcvi : 13; Dan. vii : 10; Matt. xii : 36; xiii : 41; xvi : 27; and most notably xxv : 31-46; Acts xvii : 31; 2 Cor. v : 10; 2 Thess. i : 7-10; 2 Tim. iv : 1; Rev. xx : 12. Other passages which will be quoted to show who are the Judge, and parties judged, and what the subjects of judgment, also apply fairly to this point. They need not be anticipated here.

Some laxer theologians, especially of the German school, have taught that all these passages do not teach a literal, universal, forensic act, but merely a state, to which God will successively bring all His creatures according to their respective merits; in short that the whole representation is merely figurative of certain principles of retribution. The answer is, to point to the previous arguments, which show that not only equal retributions, but a public formal declaration thereof, are called for by the purposes of God's government, and the system of doctrines; and to show that the strong terms of the Scriptures cannot be satisfied by such an explanation. There are figures; but those figures must be literalized according to fair exegetical laws; and they plainly describe the judgment as something that precedes the execution of the retribution.

The time of this great transaction, absolutely speaking, is, and is intended to be, utterly unknown to the whole human race, in order that its uncertainty may cause all to fear; 1 Thess. v : 2 ; 2 Pet. iii : 10 ; Matt. xxiv : 36, &c. Hence we may see the unscripturalness of those who endeavor to fix approximately a day, which God intends to conceal, by their interpretations of unfulfilled prophecy. If the beginning of the millennium can be definitely fixed by an event so marked as the personal advent of Christ; if its continuance can be marked off by one thousand literal, solar years; and if the short apostasy which is to follow is to last only a few years, then God's people will foreknow pretty accurately when to expect the last day. Again: the Jewish Christians, among many vague expectations concerning Christ's kingdom, evidently expected that the final consummation would come at the end of one generation from Christ's ascension. This erroneous idea was a very natural deduction from the Jewish belief, that their temple and ritual were to subsist till the final consummation, when coupled with Christ's declaration, in Matt. xxiv : that Jerusalem should be destroyed in the day of some then living. See this misconception betrayed, Matt. xxiv : 3 ; Acts i : 7. So they doubtless misunderstood Matt. xvi : 28. Now, it has ever been a favorite charge against the inspiration of the Apostles, in the mouths of infidels, that they evidently shared in this mistake. E. g. in James v : 8 ; 2 Peter iii : 12 ; Phil. iv : 5, &c. But this charge is founded only in the ignorance of the Apostles' various meanings when they speak of the "coming," or "presence," of Christ. Oftentimes they mean the believer's death; for that is practically His coming and the end of the world, to that believer; and the space between that and the general judgment is to him no space practically; because nothing can be done in it to redeem the soul. Their misunderstanding is clearly enough evinced by Paul in 2 Thess. ii : 1-3, &c., with 1 Thess. iv : 15, 17. For the

The Judgment not
merely Metaphorical.

Time of the Judgment
Did Apostles Miscalculate

latter place contains language than which none would be more liable to these skeptical perversions. Yet in the former citation we see Paul explicitly correcting the mistake.

But while, absolutely, the time of the judgment is unknown, relatively it is distinctly fixed. It will be immediately after the general resurrection, and just coincident with, or just after the final destruction of the globe by fire. The good and evil men do, live after them. Hence, that measure of merit and demerit, which is taken from consequences, is not completely visible to creatures until time is completed. St. Paul is still doing good: Simon Magus is still doing mischief. "They being dead, yet speak." We thus perceive a reason why God's declarative judgment of men, meant as it is for the instruction of the creatures and practical vindication of His justice, should be postponed until men's conduct has borne its full earthly fruits. Hence it is that the great assize is placed immediately after the resurrection. See Rev. xx: 10 to end; 2 Thess. i: 7 to 10, and similar passages. The duration of the judgment is commonly called a day; Act xvii: 31. Some, conceiving that the work of the judgment will include the intelligible revealing of the whole secret life of every creature, to every other creature, suppose that the period will vastly exceed one solar day in length, stretching possibly to thousands of years. If all this is to be done, they may well suppose the time will be long. But to me, it seems far from certain that this universal revealing of every creature to every other, is either possible or necessary. Can any but an infinite mind comprehend all this immense number of particulars? Is it necessary, in order that any one creature may have all defective and erroneous ideas about God's government corrected, which he has contracted in this life, to be introduced to the knowledge of parts of His dealings utterly unknown to, and unconnected with him? Hence I would say, that of the actual duration of the august scene, we know nothing. But we are told that its accessories will be vast and majestic. The terrors of the resurrection will have just occurred, the earth will be just consigned to destruction. Jesus Christ will appear on the scene with ineffable pomp, attended with all the redeemed and the angels; Acts i: 11. The souls of the blessed will be reunited to their bodies, and then they will be assorted out from the risen crowd of humanity, and their acquittal and glorification declared to the whole assemblage; while the unbelievers will receive their sentence of eternal condemnation.

The place of this transaction has also been subject of inquiry. To me it appears indubitable that it will occupy a place in the literal sense of the word. To say nothing of the fact that disembodied souls are not ubiquitous, the actors in this transaction will be, many of them, clothed with literal bodies, which, although glorified or

It Follows Resurrec-
tion. How Long Pro-
tracted?

Place.

damned, will occupy space just as really as here on earth. All that Scripture says about the place is, 1 Thess. iv : 17, that we "shall be caught up . . . into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Some, as Davies, have supposed that the upper regions of our atmosphere will be the place where the vast assembly will be held; while they will behold the world beneath them, either just before, or during the grand assize, wrapped in the universal fires. But see 2 Peter iii : 10. It would seem most obvious from our notions of combustion, as well as from this passage, that however that conflagration may be produced, our atmosphere, the great supporter of combustion, will be involved in it. This may serve as a specimen of the ill-success which usually meets us when we attempt to be "wise above that which is written" on these high subjects. The place is not revealed to, and cannot be surmised by us.

The Judge will unquestionably be Jesus Christ, in His mediatorial person. See Matt. xxv : 31, 32; 3. The Judge Christ. xxviii : 18; John v : 27; Acts x : 42; xvii : Why? 31; Rom. xiv : 10; Phil. ii : 10; 2 Tim. iv : 1.

These passages are indisputable. Nor have the Scriptures left us ignorant entirely, of the grounds of this arrangement. The honor and prerogative of judging "the quick and the dead," is plainly declared, in Phil. ii : 9, 10, to be a part of Christ's mediatorial exaltation, and a just consequence of His humiliation. It was right that when the Lord of all condescended, in His unspeakable mercy, to assume the form of a servant, and endure the extremest indignities of His enemies, He should enjoy this highest triumph over them, in the very form and nature of His humiliation. Indeed, in this aspect, His judging the world is but the crowning honor of His kingship; so that whatever views explain His kingly office, explain this function of it. But more than this: His saints have an interest in it. Then only is their redemption completed, justification pronounced finally, and the last consequences of sin obliterated. By the same reason that it was necessary they should have a "merciful and faithful High Priest," in all the previous exigencies of their redemption, it is desirable that they should have their Mediator for their judge in this last crisis. Otherwise they would sink in despair before the terrible bar. They would be unable to answer a word to the accuser of the brethren, or to present any excuse for their sins. But when they see their Almighty Friend in the judgment seat, their souls are re-assured. This may be the meaning of the words "because He is the Son of man." John v : 27.

There seems to be a sense, in which the saints will sit and judge with Christ. Ps. cxlix : 6-9; 1 Cor. The Saints Assess- vi : 2, 3; Rev. xx : 4. We suppose no one ors. will understand from these passages, that Christians can, or will, exercise those incommunicable functions

of searching hearts, apportioning infinite penalties to infinite demerits, and executing the sentence with almighty power. There are two lower meanings in which it may be said that saints shall judge sinners. Thus, in Matt. xii : 41, 42, the contrast of Nineveh's penitence is a sort of practical rebuke and condemnation to those who persist in the opposite conduct. But this does not express the whole truth. The saints are adopted sons of God ; " heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ; if so be we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. viii : 17. They also are " kings and priests unto God." In this sense, they share, by a sort of reflected dignity, the exaltation of their elder brother ; and in this, the culminating point of His mediatorial royalty, they are graciously exalted to share with Him, according to their lower measure. Having had their own acquittal and adoption first declared, they are placed in the post of honour, represented as Christ's right hand, and there concur as assessors with Christ, in the remainder of the transaction.

The persons to be judged will embrace all wicked angels and all the race of man. The evidence of
 4. Who Will be the former part of this proposition is explicit.
 Judged ? See Matt. viii : 29 ; 1 Cor. vi : 3 ; 2 Pet. ii : 4 ;
 Jude 6. And that every individual of the human race will be present is evident from Eccles. xii : 14 ; Ps. l : 4 ; 2 Cor. v : 10 ; Rom. xiv : 10 ; Matt. xii : 36, 37 ; xxv : 32 ; Rev. xx : 12.

Some have endeavored to limit this judgment, (as the Pelagians), to those men alone who have enjoyed gospel privileges. But if there are any principles in God's government, calling for a general judgment of those subject to it, and if pagans are subject to it, then they also should be judged. And if the passages above cited do not assert an actual universality of the judgment, it is hard to see how any language could. It will be noticed that men will be judged, and doubtless, the wicked angels likewise, for all their thoughts, words and deeds. This is obviously just, and is called for by the purposes of a judgment. For if there was any class of moral acts which had not this prospect of a judgment awaiting them, men would think they could indulge in these with impunity. Upon the question whether the sins of the righteous, already pardoned in Christ, will receive publicity in that day, Dick states the respective arguments. To me it appears that we must admit they will be, unless we can prove that the places where men are warned that they must be judged " for every idle word," for " every secret thing," were not addressed to Christians at all, but only to sinners. The disposition to deny that pardoned sins will be published in the day of judgment, doubtless arises from the feeling that it would produce a shame and compunction incompatible with the blessedness of their state. But will the saints not publish their sins themselves, in their confessions? And is it not

the sweetest type of spiritual joy, that which proceeds from contrition for sin ?

It may be further noticed, that the Scriptures are utterly silent as to the judging of the holy angels. It is therefore our duty to refrain from asserting anything about it. Some have surmised that though they are not mentioned, they will be judged, because they have some connection through their ministry of love, with the men who will be judged. But, on the other hand, it may be remarked, there is significance in the fact, that all the creatures spoken of as standing at Christ's judgment are sinful ones. The holy angels never sinned ; they have been long ago justified through a method totally inapplicable to fallen beings, the Covenant of Works, and this may constitute a valid reason why they should not bear a share in this judgment of sinning beings, who are either justified by free grace or condemned.

So far as the judgment is a display of God's attributes to the creature, it is doubtless to those creatures who are conversant with this scene of earthly struggle. The holy angels are concerned in it as interested and loving spectators ; the wicked angels as causes and promoters of all the mischief ; man, as the victim and agent of earthly sin. If God has other orders of intelligent creatures, connected with the countless worlds of which astronomy professes to inform us, who are not included in these three classes ; it is not necessary to suppose that they will share in this scene, because we have no evidence that they are cognizant of the sins and grace which lead to it. But here all is only dim surmise.

The rule by which sinners and saints will be judged, will be the will of God made known to them. The Gentiles will be judged by that natural law written on their hearts ; the Jews of the Old Testament by that, and the Old Testament alone ; but those who have enjoyed the Gospel in addition to the others, shall be judged by all three. (See Rom. ii : 12 ; Jno. xii : 48 ; Luke xii : 47 ; Jno. xv : 22). God will judge justly, and render to every man his due. In Dan. vii : 10 ; Rev. xx : 12 ; the same phrase is employed : "The judgment was set, and the books opened." Perhaps the mode of understanding this, most accordant with the mind of the Spirit, would be to attempt to apply the phrase, book, to nothing in particular, in the judgments of man ; but to regard it as a mere carrying out of the august figure ; a grand judicial trial. But if a more particular explanation must be had, we may perhaps concur in the belief, that one of these books is the Word of God, which is the statute-book, under which the cases must be decided ; another, the book of God's remembrance, from which the evidence of conduct will be read : and still another, the book of God's decrees, where the names of men were recorded before the foundation of the world.

Will Elect Angels
be Judged ?

The Spectators.

5. The Rule.

In Matt. xxv, the reprobate are condemned because they have not performed to God's suffering children acts of beneficence and charity, and the righteous acquitted because they have. It may be briefly remarked here, that while sinners will be condemned strictly on the merit of their own conduct, saints will be acquitted solely on the merit of Christ. They are rewarded according to, not because of the deeds done in the flesh. The evidence of this may be seen, where we refuted the doctrine of justification by works, and these very passages were brought into review. But the purpose of God in the judgment is to evince the holiness, justice, love, and mercy of His dealings to all His subjects. But as they cannot read the secret faith, love and penitence of the heart, the sentence must be regulated according to some external and visible conduct, which is cognizable by creatures, and is a proper test of regenerate character. It is very noticeable that not all righteous conduct, but only one kind, is mentioned as the test; these works of charity. And this is most appropriate, not only because they are accurate tests of true holiness, but because it was most proper that in a judgment where the acquittal can in no case occur, except through divine grace and pardon, a disposition to mercy should be required of those who hope for acceptance. (See Jas. ii : 13 ; Matt. x : 12, xviii : 28, &c.)

The sentence of the righteous is everlasting blessedness ; that of the wicked, everlasting misery. The discussion of the latter must be the subject of another lecture. The nature of eternal life I shall now endeavor to state. Far be it from us, to presume to be wise above that which is written ; let us modestly collect those traits of the saint's everlasting rest, which the Bible, in its great reserve on this subject, has seen fit to reveal.

The place of this eternal life is usually called heaven. It is undoubtedly a place proper, and not merely a state. For there are now, the material bodies of Christ, and of Enoch and Elijah, if not of others. There will be a multitude of bodies. The finite glorified spirits there also have a *ubi*. It is vain for us to surmise, in what part of the Universe Christ's glorified humanity now holds its court. The phrases " up," " above," " ascend," &c., teach nothing ; for what is above to us, is beneath to our antipodes, in whose places we shall be in twelve hours.

But it is not place, but character, which confers essential happiness. We are taught indeed that occasion for this spiritual blessedness will be secured to the saints by their perfect exemption from all natural evils, such as unsatisfied wants, pain, grief, sickness, violence, and death. (See Job iii : 17 ; Is. xxv : 8 ; Rev. vii : 16, 17 ; xxi : 4.) But the most important fact is, that

Relation of Works
of Charity to Judg-
ment.

The Place of Reward.

The Saints' Blessed-
ness. (a) In Exemp-
tion. (b) In Holiness.

the blessedness of the life everlasting is simply the perfection of that state which is begun here by the new birth and sanctification. As saith M. Henry, "Grace is glory begun, and glory is but grace consummated." (See Jno. v : 24 ; vi : 47 ; Gal. vi : 7). On entering heaven, the soul is made perfectly holy ; and thus every root of misery is removed. When we inquire for the objective sources of the saints' bliss, we find them subordinately in the society of fellow-saints, but chiefly in God Himself, and especially in the Redeemer. (Ps. lxxiii : 25 ; Rev. xxi : 23). That the saints' happiness will be social, is plain from the Bible representations ; and I believe that those who have known and loved each other here, will recognize each other there. (See 1 Thess. ii : 19 ; 2 Sam. xii : 23). And it appears very unreasonable that the love, and other social graces which are there perfected in their glorified humanity, should then have no objects. But the Holy Trinity will ever be the central and chief object, from which the believer's bliss will be derived.

This happiness will consist in the satisfaction of both mind and heart. Curiosity is one of the keenest and most uncloying sources of interest and pleasure to the healthy mind. Then "we shall know even as we are known;" and our minds will find perpetual delight in learning the things of God and His providence. Here will be matter of study ample enough to fill eternity.

Again: To love is to be happy: saith the Apostle John, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Our terrestrial objects of affection have taught us, that if the heart could always be exercising its affection towards some worthy object, this would constitute happiness. But the object being earthly, we are constantly liable to be separated from it by distance, or to have it torn from us by death, when our affection becomes our torment. Or, being imperfect, it may wound us by infidelity or injustice. Or else, corporeal wants drive us from it to labour. But now let us suppose the soul, endowed with an object of love wholly worthy and suitable, never separated by distance, nor torn away by death, incapable of infidelity, or unkindness ; is it not plain that in the possession and love of this object, there would be perpetual blessedness ; external evils being fenced off? Such an object is God, and such is the blessedness of heaven, springing from the perpetual indulgence of a love that never cloy, that is never interrupted, and never wounded, and that expresses its happiness in untiring praises.

The answer to the question, where shall be the place of the saints' final abode, is not vital. Where holiness, rest and Christ are, is heaven. But the doctrine that this earth is to be recon-

7. Probable Place of the Final Glory.

Elements of this Happiness Intellectual.

Moral.

structed after its purgation by fire, and is to become the dwelling place of redeemed men and the God-Man, in their resurrection bodies, is beautifully illustrative of some other truths; and it seems strongly supported by the Scriptures. First, that destruction which awaits the world by fire (2 Peter iii : 7 ; 2 Thess. i : 8,) is not to be an annihilation. There is no evidence that any atom of substance is annihilated; and we know that combustion annihilates no part of the fuel we burn. Words equally as strong (Gen. vi : 13 ; Heb. ii : 14 ; 2 Peter iii : 6), are used concerning the flood, and the judgment of Satan and the wicked, where there was no annihilation. But if the earth is to exist after the final consummation, for what end will God use it? Second: many Scriptures speak of this earth as a permanent structure, and as given to man for his home. See Ps. lxxviii : 69 ; xc : 2 ; cxv : 16 ; xxxvii : 29 ; viii : 5, 6 ; Matt. v : 5. The promise of the last three can scarcely be understood of any other than the renovated earth, because, as long as the Church is in its militant state, the righteous and the meek are forewarned that "in this world they shall have tribulation." Third; the striking analogy between our bodies' resurrection, and this *παλιγγενεσία* of our earth, gives probability to the doctrine. Man was created an incorporate, but holy and immortal creature. By his sin he corrupted his body with death. Redemption does not propose to cast off this polluted body and save him as a new species of disembodied spirit: No, redemption proposes to restore both parts of man's nature, spirit and body, and in spite of sin and Satan, to realize in eternal perfection God's original conception of a holy, glorious and immortal, incorporate creature. So, by analogy, we naturally expect that when the earth, man's heritage and home, is cursed for his sin and usurped by Satan, it is not to be surrendered to the usurpation, but to be redeemed and purged for its original destination, the eternal home of a glorified human race. This, fourth: agrees exactly with Rom. viii : 19 to 23 ; and with Eph. i : 14. The material creation is here represented, by a vivid impersonation, as interested in our redemption, and destined to share it: and there is no other idea which answers so well to that of a purchased possession to be redeemed for us hereafter, as this.

Fifth: when we pass to the New Testament prophecies, the evidence is clearer. Rev. v : 10, the representatives of the ransomed Church sing to the Lamb: "Thou hast made us to our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth!" This is a privilege which is to follow their present state of expectant glory. So 2 Peter iii : 13, tells us that believers are entitled to "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This promise is given in connection with the previous renovation of the earth by fire. In Rev. xxi : 1, 2, the apostle sees "a new heaven and a new earth" . . . "and

the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." In verse 3d he hears a great voice out of heaven, saying: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." The crowning formula of the Covenant of Grace then follows, showing that this descent of God's tabernacle to earth is the final consummation of the redemption of men.

This conclusion gives us a noble view of the immutability of God's purpose of grace, and the glory of His victory over sin and Satan. This planet was fashioned to be man's heritage; and a part of it, at least, adorned with the beauties of a paradise, for his home. Satan sought to mar the divine plan, by the seduction of our first parents. For long ages he has seemed to triumph, and has filled His usurped dominion with crime and misery. But his insolent invasion is not to be destined to obstruct the Almighty's beneficent design. The intrusion will be in vain. God's purpose shall be executed. Messiah will come and re-establish His throne in the midst of His scarred and ravaged realm; He will cleanse away every stain of sin and death, and make this earth bloom forever with more than its pristine splendour; so that the very plan which was initiated when "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy," will stand to everlasting ages.
