

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

by Archibald Alexander

That a just God will render to every man according to his character and works, is a dictate of reason. Conscience also intimates to every man, when he sins, that he deserves to be punished. When we see or hear of great crimes committed by others, such as murders, perjuries, robbery, or treachery—we feel something within us demanding that such should receive deserved punishment. But we see that the wicked are not always punished in this world, according to their evil deeds. It seems **reasonable**, therefore, to expect that there will be a judgment after death.

We are not left, however, to the mere dictates of reason on this subject. God, in his word, has revealed in the clearest manner that there will be a day of reckoning at the end of the world. This day is appointed, and will certainly come. It is not so certain that we shall ever see the sun rise again, as it is that we shall see the day of judgment. The Lord Jesus Christ is also appointed to act as Judge on that day: "because he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained." Acts 17:31. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5:10.

When this solemn day will arrive is a profound secret, not revealed to any creature in the universe. But we know that it will come **suddenly** and **unexpectedly** on those who shall then be on the earth. As it was in the days of Noah and of Lot, so will it be in the day of judgment. Men will be pursuing their common worldly business and amusements, without apprehension of danger, when the sound of the last trumpet shall be heard—for the trumpet shall sound—and the Son of man shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven!

The race of man shall not cease from the earth until that day comes. There will then be a generation of living inhabitants, probably very numerous, in the world. These will never die as other men, but they will undergo a change equivalent to death and a resurrection; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they shall be changed. But all those who are in their graves shall hear the voice of God, and shall come forth, great and small. No sooner shall the trumpet sound, than the scattered dust of unnumbered millions shall resume its proper place in every man. No matter where it lies, or how widely it may have been scattered, one word of the Almighty God is sufficient to bring it to its place, and animate it with new life. The multitude which will then start up into life cannot be conceived, it will be so great. There will stand Adam and all his posterity; there will stand those who lived before the flood, and those who have lived since; there will be seen the ancient patriarchs, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the inspired prophets and apostles; there will appear kings, emperors, nobles, and their subjects; the learned philosopher and the ignorant multitude; ministers and their

congregations, parents and their children, masters and their servants—all, all coming forward to the grand tribunal! Not one of our whole race will be absent from this great assembly. There, reader, shall you and I stand—trembling or rejoicing!

It is useless to inquire where room can be found for so great a multitude to stand, for this will be a day of miracles. All the wonders ever exhibited before will be nothing to the wonders of that day. Indeed, all that is natural will end on that day, and everything will be miraculous. The sun will no longer rise and set, the moon no longer give her light, and the stars shall no longer appear in the skies. Heaven will appear to have come down to earth, for the King of kings and Lord of heaven will be visible to all, with all his own glory and that of his Father. And all the holy angels will appear in attendance, standing round his throne, ready to execute his orders, whether of justice or of mercy.

When all things are prepared—when the Judge has taken his seat on the tribunal, and all men are brought before him, the judgment will begin; *"and the books will be opened."* What books these are, except one, which is "the book of life," we are not informed; but we may be sure that one is the book of God's law, and another the record of human actions which is in the "book of" God's "remembrance." It is not necessary to think of more. These contain all that is necessary for conducting the trial of every man. The one contains the law, and the other the testimony. But everything will be conducted with the most perfect justice and equity. Every man will be judged for his own deeds, and according to that knowledge of the law which he had opportunity of acquiring. The omniscience of the Judge will enable him to estimate with perfect exactness all the circumstances of every action; everything which aggravates guilt, and everything which palliates it, will have due consideration. Those who lived under the patriarchal dispensation, will be judged according to the light and advantages then enjoyed. Those who lived under the Mosaic economy, will be judged by the law of Moses. Those who enjoyed the clear light of the gospel, will be dealt with in a manner accordant to their advantages. Those who enjoyed no external revelation, will be judged by that law written on the hearts of all men.

The things which shall be brought under the eye of the Judge, and exhibited to the view of the universe, are, all deeds done in the body—whatever a man has done, whether good or bad. Every secret thing. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Eccl. 12:14. Every idle word. "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. 12:36. The thoughts of the heart shall also be made manifest. Every unholy desire; every proud, envious, or malicious thought; every secret purpose of iniquity; every unhallowed temper; every rebellious and discontented and ungrateful feeling towards God and his government—will be brought into judgment.

And the inquiry will extend not only to positive acts of sin; but also to omissions of duty. Great as is the number of the acts of wickedness, the catalogue of omissions will be greater, and not less criminal. The first sin of this sort, which will claim the attention of the Judge, and will be the omission to entertain and cultivate right sentiments towards God. No more heavy charge will be brought against any individual on that day, than that he neglected to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. This is the total violation of the first and greatest command, and the fountain of all other iniquities.

The neglect to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ when he was offered to us a complete Savior in the gospel, will, to the unfruitful hearers of the word, be an accusation of the highest kind. The heinousness and enormity of unbelief which now affects the consciences of men so little, will on that day appear in a glaring light. It will not be strange if it should call forth reproaches upon the unhappy culprit, from devils who never had a Savior provided, and from heathen who never had a Savior offered to them.

In that account which our Lord has given of the process of the judgment, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, the neglect of kindness to the godly, by visiting, comforting, and aiding them, is the only thing mentioned. Whatever else, then, may be noticed, we are sure this will not be forgotten. The whole passage is so solemn and interesting, that it deserves our deepest attention: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?' "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you didn't take Me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of Me.' "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?' "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.' "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

And let it be well considered, that most of the sins which are mentioned in the discourses or Christ as the ground of condemnation, are **sins of omission**. The slothful servant, who prepares not himself, is the wicked servant, who will be cast into outer darkness. The man who wrapped his talent in a napkin and buried it, is condemned out of his own mouth. For "to him that knows to do good," of any kind, "and does it not—to him it is sin!" James 4:17.

Many who prided themselves in their inoffensive lives and harmless behavior, will find, when the books are opened, **a catalogue of omissions which will startle them with horror, and overwhelm them with confusion!**

"God does not view things the way men do. People look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the **heart**." 1 Samuel 16:7

"You are the ones who make yourselves look right in other people's sight, but God knows your **hearts**. For the things that are considered of great value by people are worth nothing in God's sight." Luke 16:15

"He Himself knew what was in their **hearts**." John 2:25

"Lord, you know the **thoughts** of everyone." Acts 1:24

"Almighty Lord, You test people justly; You know what is in their **hearts** and **minds**." Jeremiah 20:12

"You alone know the **thoughts** of the human **heart**. Deal with each person as he deserves." 1 Kings 8:39

And as externally good *actions* will then be examined by One who has a full view of the **motives** from which they proceeded, and the end which the person had in view—is it not certain that many religious actions will then appear to have been mere hypocrisy? that many actions, apparently just and benevolent, were mere efforts of pride and selfishness? and that a life moral and blameless in the eyes of men—was a mere cloak which covered a heart full of unclean lusts? Our most intimate friends here will be astonished when they see our secret iniquities and wicked motives exposed to view. The most detestable crimes will be unveiled in those who passed through life without suspicion! O how many secret murders, perjuries, thefts, blasphemies, and adulteries—will then be brought to light! How much injustice, fraud, cruelty, oppression, pride, malice, revenge will then be unveiled!

The cries of the injured, the widow, and the orphan, always enter into the ears of the Lord, and he now comes to avenge them. Cruel persecutors of God's people, though clothed in purple, and almost adored when living in the world, will now be brought to a severe account. The blood of the martyred saints from beneath the altar has been long crying out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not

judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. 6:10. And now the day of retribution has arrived!

What will be the **length** of time occupied with the judgment we know not. It is called *a day*, but it will differ exceedingly from all other days; and in its duration, probably, as well as in other respects. Our wisdom is to attend to what is revealed, and to repress a vain curiosity in regard to other matters. We may rest assured that the whole process will be wisely conducted, and that complete **justice** will be done. *The Judge of all the earth will do right!* He will not condemn the innocent, nor clear the guilty. And his judgment will be most **impartial**. There will be no respecting of people. The king and the beggar will stand upon equal ground, and will be judged by the same standard. Those who in this world were reviled and slandered, and had no opportunity of clearing up their character, will then be vindicated, and lies and reproaches will have effect no more.

But here a serious difficulty occurs. It may be said, "If the law of God is the rule of judgment, and if all sins are brought into judgment, then **certainly every human being must be condemned**—'for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' According to this view, none can be saved. To remove this difficulty, let it be remembered, that besides the book of the law, there is another book which will be produced there, written from the foundation of the world. This is called THE BOOK OF LIFE. This contains the names—and they shall never be blotted out—of all those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These he has undertaken to present to God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. They will appear on that day clothed with the righteousness of the Redeemer. The Judge on the throne is their covenanted Surety. He answers to every accusation made against them.

But notwithstanding "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" notwithstanding none can "lay anything to the charge of God's elect;" yet they also shall be brought into judgment. When all things are prepared, and the whole assembly is collected before the solemn tribunal, a separation will be made of the great congregation into two parts, the righteous, and the wicked. The former will be placed on the right hand of the Judge, and with them he will commence. But no sooner shall their numerous sins be brought to view, than it will be made to appear that they are pardoned through the blood of Christ! When the books are opened, a long account will appear against them; but on the other hand, it will be seen that the whole is freely forgiven through the riches of grace in Christ Jesus!

But a most **exact** account will be taken of all their good works; and they will be mentioned to their honor, and rewarded as though no imperfection had cleaved to them! The least act of kindness done to any of Christ's followers will be magnified and rewarded as if done to Christ himself. Even the giving a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. People in the lowest state, servants and slaves, who performed their duty

faithfully, shall not be forgotten in that day. "Remember that the Lord will reward each of us, whether slave or free, for the good work we do." Eph. 6:8.

But those who suffered persecution and death for righteousness' sake, will be most highly distinguished, and most signally rewarded. "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven!" Matt. 5:11, 12. They also who have labored much in promoting the Redeemer's kingdom, will receive a reward proportioned to their works of faith and labors of love. But none who have done good shall fail of their reward. Everyone shall receive according to what he has done; and everyone will be satisfied; for the lowest place in glory is a situation too dazzling for our present conceptions, and the whole is a matter of pure grace. These works, considered in themselves, deserve no reward. But it is the will of God that every holy desire, every good word and work, in the members of Christ's body, should receive a mark of his favor—to the honor and glory of him who is their Head, and who died for their salvation.

When the gracious sentence, "*Come, you blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,*" is pronounced, the righteous shall be caught up to the Lord, and shall be seated by his side, and be united with him in the remaining transactions of that great day; for it is written, "The saints shall judge the world," and, "Know you not that you shall judge angels?"

The case of the righteous being disposed of, then will come the awful transaction of pronouncing sentence on the wicked. They will, indeed, have anticipated the sentence. By this time they will be certain of their doom; but the scene itself will far exceed all apprehensions before entertained. To behold the face of inflexible justice turned towards them—to hear the irreversible sentence of condemnation, and that too from the mouth of the benevolent Son of God—to feel in the inmost soul the justice of the sentence—to be as certain of everlasting damnation as they are of existence—are things concerning which we can speak now, but of which we can form but very feeble conceptions, compared with the dreadful reality. In all his existence there will probably be no moment in which the sinner's anguish will be so poignant as in this, when the Judge shall say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Matt. 25:41.

Every word in this tremendous denunciation will pierce through the soul with more insufferable pain than ten thousand daggers. It is reasonable to think that every person against whom it is pronounced, will endure as much misery at that moment as in the nature of things is possible. And if this were all, the prospect would be appalling; but **to be doomed to endless misery in fire, with the devil and his angels!—who can bear the thought without horror and dismay?** Yet, as sure as God is true, will this sentence be executed on every impenitent sinner. Men may reason and cavil now, but then every mouth shall be stopped. That the cry of despair and horror will be heard through the great multitude, is

certain—such a great and bitter cry as was never heard before. But it is all in vain; repentance comes too late. The day of grace is forever past. The gospel dispensation is ended. This is the consummation of all things.

No change in condition can ever be expected. Those who are saved, have their salvation secured by the oath and promise of God; and those who are lost, have their damnation sealed forever and ever by a judicial sentence which can never be revoked. And from this sentence there is no appeal. There is no higher tribunal to which the cause may be transferred. Neither can any resistance be made to the execution of the sentence. Those who are now bold and daring in their blasphemies and rebellion, will then find that they are in the hands of a sin-avenging God. It will belong to the holy angels, who are mighty in power, to execute the sentence of the Judge. "So shall it be," said our blessed Savior, "at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 13:49, 50. And it will be as impossible to escape as to resist. The rocks and mountains will not cover them. They cannot cease to exist. Go where they will, God is there to execute deserved wrath upon them. They will therefore be obliged "to go away into everlasting punishment." Matt. 25:46.

The devil and his angels will also be judged on that day; but of the particular nature of the trial we are not informed. All that we know is, that "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Jude, ver. 6. They are now miserable, but their cup is not full; therefore they cried out when they saw Jesus, "Have you come to torment us before the time?" Matt. 8:29. At the breaking up of this great assembly, the present system of the world will be destroyed. For "the present heavens and earth are held in store for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." 2 Pet. 3:7.

Reader, deeply fix in your mind the certainty and importance of the transactions of this last, great day. Meditate upon it as a reality in which you have a momentous interest. Let every other day, as it passes, put you in mind of this in which all others will end. Consider also that it draws near. Every moment bears us on towards the great tribunal. Mockers may say, Where is the promise of his coming? "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." 2 Pet. 3:10.

O reader, whoever you are, let me entreat you to inquire without delay, whether you are prepared for the scrutiny and judgment of this coming day. Have you made your peace with God? Have you repented of all your sins? Are you in union with Christ by faith? Have you any clear scriptural evidence that your sins are pardoned? What says conscience to these inquiries? Be assured, if your own

heart condemns you, God, who is greater than your heart, and knows all things, will much more condemn you. But your situation is not like that of them whose day of grace is ended. You are yet in the place of reconciliation. You have yet a little time before you—God only knows how much. *Now*, then, hear the voice of warning! Hear the voice of mercy! *Now "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Now forsake your sins, and live! Accept the offered grace—"lay hold on eternal life!"*

Let no consideration induce you to delay your conversion. The importance of salvation—the uncertainty of life—the danger of provoking the Holy Spirit to abandon you—the example of thousands who have perished by procrastination—should urge you to lose no time, but to fall in with the gracious invitation of the gospel. But if you will refuse, then prepare to meet an angry God! Harden yourself against the terrors of the Almighty; summon all your fortitude to bear your dreadful doom from the Judge of living and dead. But I refrain—there is no fortitude or patience in hell.

Reader, are you advanced in years? Let your gray hairs and pains and wrinkles admonish you that you are near to judgment; for what if death intervene, yet after death all preparation is impossible. Just as death leaves us—so will judgment find us—and keep us. "In the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie." Eccl. 11:3. Consider also that the number of your sins is in proportion to the number of your days. Long life will prove a dreadful curse to those who die in their sins!

But if you are in youth, or in the vigor of manhood, remember that your life is a vapor; that most men do not live out half their days; and that of those who shall appear before the judgment, comparatively few will have finished their course of threescore years and ten. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth." Eccl. 12:1. "Behold, the Judge stands before the door!" James 5:9. Others have been suddenly taken away from your side. They also intended to make preparation hereafter; but while they were pleasing themselves with the prospect of many years, and were saying, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry!" God said, "You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you!" "Be therefore ready also, for at such an hour as you think not, the Son of man comes."

"Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree," and now perhaps you are spared, on account of the prayer of some kind intercessor, for one year. This, for anything you know, may be your last year. If so, it behooves you to make good use of your time and privileges. Let the idea of the judgment be ever before your mind. There you must appear—there you must stand and render up your account—there you must be filled with overwhelming shame and terror—there you must hear the awful final sentence, which will fix your doom irreversibly, unless by a speedy repentance, and by faith in Jesus Christ, you flee from the wrath to come!

May God, of his infinite mercy, cause the truths which you have read in this tract to sink deeply into your mind; and by the light of his Holy Spirit lead you to just views of your own condition, and to saving views of the Lord Jesus Christ—the only Redeemer of lost sinners! Amen.