

# *The Day of Judgment*

**Archibald Alexander (1772-1851)**

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; and 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 condign 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 hath appointed a day, in which he will judge that world in righteousness, by that man whom he that ordained." Acts 17:31. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10.

When this awful 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 trump 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 they that 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 firmament. Heaven will appear to have come down to earth, for the King of kings and Lord of heaven will be visible to all, with 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 judicial process 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 every thing will be conducted with the most perfect equity. Every man will be judged for his own deeds, and according to that knowledge of the law which he had opportunity of acquitting. The omniscience of the Judge will enable him to estimate with perfect exactness all the circumstances of every action; every thing which aggravated guilt, and every thing which palliates it, will have due consideration. They who lived under the patriarchal dispensation, will be judged according to the light and advantages then enjoyed; they who lived under the Mosaical economy, will be judged by the law of Moses; and they who enjoyed the clear light of the gospel, will be dealt with in a manner accordant to their advantages; while they 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 — whatsoever a man hath 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." Ecclesiastes 12:14. Every idle word. "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give a

account thereof in the day of judgment." Matthew 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; 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, will be the omission to entertain and cherish 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 Saviour 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 Saviour provided, and from heathen who never had a Saviour 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 saints, 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 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. For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 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. For I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And

these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Matthew 25:31-46.

And let it be well considered, that most of the sins which are mentioned in the discourses of Christ as the ground of condemnation, are sins of omission. The slothful servant, who prepares not himself, is the wicked servant, who wrapped his talent in a napkin and buried it, is condemned out of his own mouth. For "to him that knoweth to do good," of any kind, "and doeth 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. And as actions externally good will then be examined by One who has a full view of the motives from which they proceeded, and the end which the agent 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 civil 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. Crimes the most detestable will be found in the skirts of 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! 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 church and 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, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth?" Revelation 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 persons. The king and the beggar will stand upon equal ground, and will be judged by the same rule. 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 any thing 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 august 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, that 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. Persons in the lowest state, servants and slaves, who performed their duty faithfully, shall not be forgotten in that day, for "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Ephesians 6:8. But they who suffered persecution and death for righteousness' sake, will be most highly distinguished, and most signally rewarded. "Blessed are ye when me shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven." Matthew 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. Every one shall receive according to what he hath done; and every one 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, ye 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 ye not that ye 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 toward 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, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matthew 25:41. Every word in this tremendous denunciation will pierce through the soul with more insufferable pain than the 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 for ever past. The gospel dispensation is ended. This is the consummation of all things. No change in condition can ever be expected. They that are saved, have their salvation secured by the oath and promise of God; and they who are lost, have their damnation sealed for ever 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. They 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 Saviour, "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." Matthew 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." Matthew 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 hath 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, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Matthew 8:29. At the

breaking up of this great assembly, the present system of the world will be destroyed. For "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 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 is 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 the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein, shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

O reader, whoever thou art, let me entreat you to inquire without delay, whether you are prepared for the scrutiny and judgment of this coming day. Have you made you 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 knoweth 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 hear your dreadful doom from the Judge of quick and dead. But I forbear — there is no fortitude or patience in hell.

Reader, art thou advanced in years? Let thy gray hairs and pains and wrinkles admonish thee that thou art near to judgment; for what if death intervene, yet after death all preparation is impossible. Just as death finds us, so will judgment. "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." Ecclesiastes 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 thou art in youth, or in the vigor of manhood, remember that thy life is a vapor; that most men do not live out half their days: and that of those who shall appear before the judgment-seat, comparatively few will have finished their course of threescore years and ten. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Ecclesiastes 12:1 "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door."

James 5:9. Others have been suddenly taken away from your side. They also intend to make preparation hereafter; but while they were pleasing themselves with the prospect of many years, and were saying, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years" God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Be ye therefore ready also, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." "Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree," and now perhaps thou art spared, on account of the prayer of some kind intercessor, for one year. This, for aught thou knowest, may be thy 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.



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