JESUS, THE JUDGE

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A SERMON
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"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and the dead."
Acts 10:42

You will notice throughout this short address by Peter how very careful he is to speak not at all upon his own authority, but wholly upon the authority of the Most High. He commences his conversation by saying that God had shown him that it would be right for him, as a Jew, to commune with Gentiles. God had shown it to him—he had not, therefore, broken through Jewish law as the result of his own judgment, but under divine direction.

He goes on to commence his sermon by saying, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel." He had come, therefore, not with a word of his own inventing, but with a word of God's sending. "That word, I say, ye know." Then he speaks of Jesus of Nazareth Himself as anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and he speaks of himself and his fellow apostles as "witnesses," bearing testimony to what the Lord Jesus had done.

Now, this way of speaking was perhaps rendered the more necessary by the mistaken reverence which Cornelius had rendered to his person, for he fell down at the apostle's feet and worshipped him, but it should be the constant habit of all the ministers of Christ. It is ours to keep within the bounds of our commission, and shield ourselves behind its authority.

What are we that we should of ourselves have aught to say unto you, my brethren? What is our authority, and by what right can we speak of ourselves? Verily, we have no such power over you, and if we come unto you in our own name, bid us not God speed. Every true minister must speak, because he is commanded to speak. He must speak what he is commanded to speak, and he must be prepared to fall back upon the authority of the Word of God continually.

"If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." But if the testimony of any man is in accordance with the Word of God, then is God with him, and it would be perilous to reject his testimony.

The apostle was not long in his address before he came to the doctrine of the judgment of all men by Jesus Christ. He says that he was commanded to preach it, and therefore he did preach it. It may not be called "the Gospel," but it is certainly a most important accessory truth to the Gospel—it is one of those doctrines without which a Gospel ministry would not be complete.

I mean that if in any testimony concerning Christ, the doctrine that He shall come a second time to judge the world were utterly neglected, such a testimony would not be a complete Gospel. Hence you find that Paul, when he preached to the famous congregation of the Areopagites, took care to insist upon this truth.

In Acts 17:30-31, he says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

This was also a part of Paul's subject when he stood before Felix, "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come"—and this made Felix tremble, for there is great force of conviction in that solemn truth.

The doctrine of the judgment of the world by Christ was used by Peter and Paul, and other apostles as a sort of preliminary truth which they insisted upon before they came to the essence of the Gospel, which consists in preaching Jesus Christ as a Savior. They plowed with this doctrine before they sowed the invitations of the Gospel.

They did not, however, lay the axe to the root and then forget to proclaim the word of grace—they preached the terrors of the Lord, not in a legal, but a Gospel manner. Peter does so in this case, for he first speaks of Christ in the judgment, and then in verse forty-three he adds, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

This morning, in obedience to the same command, I shall try to speak, first of all, upon *the message*, and secondly, upon *the evident importance to be attached to it*, which we shall in a great measure gather from the words of our text. May the Holy Ghost, who in Peter's day fell on all those who heard his word, fall also upon you as you are led to believe in the Lord Jesus.

I. First, let us consider THE MESSAGE which God commands all His servants to declare.

That message begins with the assurance that *there is a moral government*. There is a Judge over the race of men—we are not as the locusts, of whom Solomon says that they have no king. The world is not left unobserved of God, to be as a den of wild beasts, or a pond of fish, where everyone devours his fellow, and none calls them to account.

Men are not permitted to do whatsoever is right in their own eyes, but there is a law, and a Governor over them. God has committed at this day all authority unto the Son. And Jesus Christ at this moment reigns and rules over the whole race of men, taking account of all the actions that are done in their bodies, and making note of everything in order to the summing up of all things by and by. There is a law, there is a rule, there is a government, over the human commonwealth. The race is not left to anarchy—Jesus Christ is Head of all.

That being announced, we have to go on to say that *there will be a judgment*. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." As the result of there being a government over mankind, an assize will be held, wherein cases will be tried, and justice will be administered. This, indeed, is the sanction and support of the law, that it will call men to account.

Its voice of power proclaims, "O ye house of Israel, I will judge you everyone after his ways." There will be a day of final account. I need not stop to quote the numerous passages of Scripture which assert that every one of us must give an account of himself before God, for we are fully persuaded that, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

But my brethren, we think that all reasonable persons will conclude that there must be a judgment, if they will only consider the character of God. Being the ruler of the world, He must do justice. We should count any man who was made a king but a miserable counterfeit of a monarch if he never administered justice at all.

If we had a state without laws, or laws without punishments for those who broke them, we should be indeed in a wretched condition, and our king would be the mimicry of royalty. But such is not the case in the kingdom of Him who rules over all. It is said of our Lord, "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness"—this makes us feel that He wills to do justice, and as assuredly as He has power to punish transgression, we feel certain that He will do so.

There will come a day in which He will judge the acts of men, because His character is not such that He could or would trifle with evil. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

"The Father who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's works" will not permit offenders to insult His laws with impunity. It is wrapped up in the very idea of God that He is Judge of all the earth, and must do right—and to do right He must hold a final court in which He will "render to every man according to his deeds."

The character of man equally involves a judgment, for he is evidently a responsible being, and this is dear to anybody who cares to open his eyes. We count not the cattle of the hills or the fish of the sea

responsible—let them do what they may. No one blames the wolf that he ravens or the lion that he devours, but when we come to think of man, we regard him as a creature whose actions have a moral quality about them, and are either right or wrong.

In fact, he is a responsible agent. Surely, where there is responsibility there is a law, and where there is a law, there must some day or other be rewards for well-doers and punishments for malefactors. The constitution and nature of man inevitably require this, or else his responsibility is given to him in vain.

Now, the present tangled condition of the world's history requires that there should be a day of rectification at the end of time. At this moment, we often see the wicked prosper while the righteous are abased. At this day, the mirth and the jollity are often connected with sin, while sorrow and grief go hand in hand with godliness in many and many an instance.

Remember how the wise man argued, and be persuaded by his reasoning, "Moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." Since the actions of men are evidently left unpunished now, and high-handed sin holds power, there must come a righting of the wrong and a clearing of the just.

The Judge of all the earth must do right, and how can this be but by a final adjustment in which it shall be clearly seen that though the wicked prosper for a while, they are as bullocks fattening for the slaughter—and though the righteous suffer for a while, it is but as the gold suffers in the furnace—that it may come forth purified.

Every heart that has ever groaned under the oppressor's wrong, every soul that has ever writhed under the proud man's contumely, must feel that there must be an end to the reign and riot of evil, and a time in which innocence shall be avenged. Every Job may lift up himself before his false accusers, and say, "I know that my avenger liveth, and that he will stand in the latter day upon the earth."

Moreover, there is in the consciences of most, if not of all men, a testimony to a coming judgment. I will not say of all men, for I believe that some manage so to drug their self-consciousness as at last to quiet all their fears. But the most of men believe in a judgment to come, and in their more thoughtful moods are alarmed thereat.

There is more faith as to the judgment than we dream of in those who are most profanely daring in their speeches against God. The reason why they speak so exceeding proud is because their consciences make them cowards, and to veil their cowardice they use bombastic words. These are the men that tremble first—the men that first cry out for mercy when the hand of God begins to touch them.

How very seldom do you find a man die in stolid unbelief! At some time or other, reason will speak and conscience will be heard, and then that "dread of something after death" makes men cling even to the most wretched state—choosing, rather, to bear the ills they have than fly to others that they know not of. Universal conscience, or almost universal conscience, speaks like a prophet within the soul, and tells of a throne of judgment, a heaven, and a hell.

Now, whether we had or had not this argument to support us would make not one jot of difference to those of us who believe in the Word of God. What God says would always be enough for us, even if the nature of things and the apparent force of reason should flatly contradict His Word. Yes, I will even put it in that harsh way.

We are always glad when we get the subordinate help of arguments fetched from the nature of things, and so forth, but we care very little about them. We have accepted the Bible as God's revelation. We believe the teaching of this book to be infallible, and inasmuch as the Scriptures declare that there is a judgment to come, we confidently look for it.

Now, according to the revelation of the Gospel, *this judgment will be conducted by the man Christ Jesus*. God will judge the world, but it will be through His Son, whom He has ordained and appointed to actually carry out the business of that last tremendous day. He who shall sit upon the throne is "the Son of man."

He will be thus enthroned, I suppose, partly because it is involved in His mediatorial office in which the Lord has put all things in subjection under His feet. He is at the right hand of God—"angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." God has been pleased to put the world, not under the direct government of personal deity, but under the government of the Mediator, that He might deal with us in mercy.

That Mediator is both Prophet, Priest, and King—and His kingship would be shorn of its glory if the King had not the power of life and death, and the power of holding court and judging His subjects. Jesus Christ, therefore, being mediatorial King and Sovereign, all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth, He will take unto Himself His great power at the last, and will judge the nations.

This high position is also awarded to our Lord as an honor from the Father, by which shall be wiped away every trace of the shame and dishonor through which He passed among the sons of men. The kings of the earth stood up to judge Him, but they shall stand before Him to be judged. The rulers took counsel together to condemn Him, but the rulers shall stand at His bar to be themselves condemned.

Pontius Pilate and the chief priests shall all be there, and Caesar, and all Caesars and Czars and emperors and kings and princes shall do homage before Him in the lowest manner, by standing before His judgment seat as prisoners to be tried by Him. There will be no recollection of the sceptre of reed, for He shall break His enemies with a rod of iron.

There shall be no marks of the thorn-crown, for on His head shall be many a diadem. Men shall not then be able to think of Him as the man of tears, with visage sadly marred by grief and shame, for His eyes shall be as a flame of fire, and His countenance as the sun shining in its strength.

O cross, whatever of shame there was about you shall be wiped out forever among the sons of men, for this man shall sit upon the throne of judgment! The Father designed to put this honor upon Him, and He has right well deserved it.

Jesus Christ as God has a glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But as God-man, He has a glory which His Father has given Him to be the reward of that labor of life and death by which He has redeemed His people. "Give unto the LORD glory and strength" is the ascription of all His saints, and God the everlasting Father has done this unto His Son, concerning whom He has sworn that every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

I want you especially to remember that in the Holy Scriptures we are perpetually reminded in reference to the judgment that it is a judgment by *the man Christ Jesus*. There must be special reason for this honor done to the manhood of our Lord, or it would not be so continually insisted upon. Daniel in his prophecy (Dan 7:13), says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him."

The coming one in his vision was "the Son of man," and we all know to whom that title belongs. Hence our Lord Himself very early in His ministry took care to claim for Himself this power of governance and judgment. Turn to John 5:22, where He says, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

Then in verse 27, He gives us the reason for His being thus ordained to be the Judge, "And he hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." So that not only does Daniel see Him as the Son of man, but Jesus Christ Himself declares that the authority to judge is given to Him because He is the Son of man—there being in that fact a peculiar reason why He should be Judge of all mankind.

Your memories will at once allow you to recollect that in the famous pictures drawn by our Lord wherein He describes the judgment (Mat 25:31-32), He takes care to begin by saying, "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." He does not call Himself the Son of God in this case, but says, "The Son of man shall come in His glory." So is it, too, in Matthew 13:41—"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend."

This it was which seems to have struck the apostle Paul so much when he quoted from the Psalms, and applied the language to Christ in Hebrews 2, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Whereon he says, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour."

It is as Son of man as well as Son of God that our Lord will judge the world at the last great day. Be you sure, then, of His impartiality. He is God, yet man—having an intense sympathy both with the King and with the subjects—having manifested His grace even to the rebellious, and being yet filled with intense love to the Father and His law.

If we could have the election of a judge, what being could we suppose more impartial or so impartial as the Lord, who though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh? O blessed Judge, be Thou at once enthroned by the choice of the whole creation!

This person is peculiarly suitable to be Judge because He has a perfect knowledge of the law. "Yea, thy law is my delight," says He. He put on righteousness as a garment. The Lord Jesus Christ from His youth up was an exceedingly deep scholar of the law of God. He grew as a child in wisdom concerning the will of God. His ear was opened to hear as He learned, that He might know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary.

He knows the law, for He made Himself subject to it, and kept it in all its parts. This is the first requisite of a judge—to be thoroughly well-acquainted with the statute-book. Yet further, He knows also the evil of law-breaking. What a Judge is this whom God has appointed, who, strange to say, has Himself suffered for sin! Though in Him was no sin, for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Yet the sting of sin, which is death, He has endured, and the curse of sin has passed upon Him, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

With what precision, then, can *He* judge who, being both God and man, and knowing well the law, has also an intimate acquaintance with all the heinousness and wickedness of law-breaking! Well did the Father choose Him to be the Judge of the quick and dead. It puts judgment beyond a cavil when He who is the Friend of sinners is made the Judge of sinners.

Thus much, then, concerning the fact that there will be a judgment, and that this judgment will be conducted by the man Christ Jesus.

Now, observe, that *this judgment will concern all mankind*. He will judge the quick and dead, that is, those who will be alive at His coming He will judge as well as those who have already died. He may come before some of us shall die. The time of His advent we cannot guess, but we shall certainly appear before His judgment seat whenever He shall fix the assize.

The summons will exempt no man—from the utmost ends of the earth shall they come. None will be able to hide themselves in solitary places, or to find shelter amongst the crowded cities. Here and there a criminal escapes the vigilant eye of human law. Though it be difficult to do so, yet there have been cunning men who year after year have managed by various disguises to escape recognition, and have continued their depredations and evaded the police.

But there shall be no such instance among all that shall be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. And as for the dead who have died in past ages, they shall all rise again. What prodigious multitudes! What crowds that baffle all arithmetic! Yet shall they all be arraigned and tried—all the living and all the dead, of Christian lands and heathen lands—of antediluvian ages and of ages upon which the ends of the earth have come.

Kings and princes and every bondman, rich and poor, small and great, shall all stand in that last great day in Christ's great judgment hall. It concerns you, my brother, as it does me. It concerns you, my sister, and your children, as well as those who have gone before.

As surely as the Lord lives, the things that are seen shall pass away—mountains and hills shall flee before Him, and rocks shall be melted down at His presence—but His Word shall never pass away. And behold He comes. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

Just a few words concerning this judgment. When He does come, that *judgment will be a very eminent one*. It will be a judgment fixed by the peremptory ordinance of God, for the text says that He has "ordained" Jesus to sit as Judge. It is by ordinance and decree that Jesus Christ will take the throne. He takes not this honor upon Himself on His own authority, but He claims the throne as one that was ordained of God as was Aaron.

In all His offices, He quotes the divine decree, and for this, the last of all, He has the ordinance of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead. Everything done will be by divine authority—there will be the stamp and seal of the everlasting God set upon everything that shall be transacted on that grand occasion.

The whole trial will be most solemnly conducted. I shall not for a single moment attempt a description of the scene. There is room, indeed, for imagery and poetry, but we have none of these, and want them not this morning. This will suffice, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1Th 4:16).

There shall be shoutings when He comes, as if all the angelic bands lifted up their voices in acclamation, and above them all one voice shall ring out most majestically, the voice of the archangel. And yet above all other sounds a trumpet-call shall thunder forth, most dreadful to the ears of ungodly men. Louder than ten thousand thunders shall it peal over earth and sea, and none shall be able to resist the summons.

Then, in His descent, the Judge shall pass into the region of the clouds, upon a great white throne shall He sit, and every eye shall see Him—and also they which crucified Him. His coming will be with great pomp of angelic splendor, fit for the state of such a King, and for the solemnity of such a day.

That judgment will be very searching, for the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:10, that we shall give an account for the deeds done in the body, each one according to what he has done, whether it be good or whether it be bad.

And our Savior, in Matthew 12:36, informs us that for every idle word that man shall speak he must give account in the day of judgment—words, therefore, will be put in evidence as well as actions. Yea, and there will be an account taken in that day of things which never reached the publicity of words, for you know how Solomon closed up the book of Ecclesiastes by saying that, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

Paul also says, "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Such things as were never known by our fellow creatures, and were forgotten by ourselves, shall be revealed and judged. Imaginations, lustings, and desires of the soul, secret thoughts and passions, and murmuring shall be laid open before all men, and before God shall a reckoning be made.

That judgment will be of a very exact kind. It will proceed upon evidence and documentary testimony—and slander and hearsay will not be mentioned there. No condemnation will come upon good men through the whisperings of malicious tongues, but everything shall be gone about in due order, and according to the rules of the court of heaven.

Listen to this, "And I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them: and I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened"—documentary testimony brought into court as evidence—

"and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Don't you see that the judgment will be done by record, and solemn affidavit, in that great Court of King's Bench. There will be no hurry, no passing over judgment with a light hand—but all will be done in truth and equity, and according to facts recorded by the infallible omniscience of God.

But what severity of justice will then be seen, for things will not be judged by their outward appearance, but put to thorough test and trial. Hear ye the word of the Lord, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Well may we cry with Malachi, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap."

The sentences which will then be pronounced will be so just as to be indisputable, and even the condemned will own the justness thereof. At the last great day, not one of the condemned shall be able to deny his guilt, nor the justice of the sentence. Though sent to hell, he will feel it is what he deserves.

You remember when the king came in to see the guests, and found a man that had not on a wedding garment, the intruder could make no excuse, but stood speechless? There shall be an assent in every human mind to the sentence of the Christ of God—it shall flash such awful conviction into the soul of every sinner that, though he be damned, his own soul shall say "Amen" to the condemnation.

Oh, what a judgment day will that be in which every one shall be certain, even in his own sad case, that the verdict of the Judge is bright as the sun with righteousness, and cannot be appealed against! This, surely, will be the hell of hell, that it is deserved even in its utmost pang and bitterest pain. Oh, my hearers, will any of you have to say "Amen" to your own condemnation? I pray the Lord to save you from such a fate.

That verdict will be final and irreversible. When Jesus has once pronounced it, there will be no appeal, no suing out of a writ of error, no reversal of the decree. He Himself has said it, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

There will be no delay in execution, nor escape from the doom. There will be no steeling of the heart to endure it, and no outliving the doom. It will last on in all its terror—the final verdict of the Judge of all the earth, pronounced by the Christ of love. I know not how to speak upon such a theme as this, but must leave it as it stands before you. May the Holy Ghost impress it upon your minds.

II. I desire, in the second place, to call your attention for a little while to THE EVIDENT IMPORTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE.

Its importance may be gathered from the text, because it says, "He *commanded* us to preach this." Did the eternal God give a command for us to preach this truth? Then He must know, in His infinite wisdom that there is a great necessity for its being declared.

But please notice the way in which the command is to be executed. "He commanded us to *preach*." Now, to preach means to herald, to proclaim. Lo, we this day precede the great Judge, as the trumpeters go before our judges on assize day, and this is our cry, "He comes! He comes! He comes! The Man of Nazareth, Jesus the crucified, is coming, appointed Judge of the quick and dead!" And we are to cry this with all the loudness of voice, and earnestness of tone, and solemnity of manner which become the heralds of the King of kings.

Whether you believe it or not, He comes. Whether you trifle with it or not, whether you are rebels or loyal subjects, He comes, and that speedily. He comes to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity. Thus we make solemn proclamation in His name, declaring to you a fact which you do well to hear with serious hearts and thoughtful minds.

But then it is added that we are "*to testify* that it is He." Having given the proclamation, we are then to bear witness solemnly, and to speak the fact over and over again for God, adding our own belief that it is surely true. In the Greek, this word "testify" is very forcible, something like the affirmation which those of us who account it wrong to take an oath are wont to make in courts of law.

We give our solemn affirmation and truthful testimony that it is so. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth that we declare when we tell you that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of man, is coming upon the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and dead. We are to speak of this as a thing we know and are certain of—and we are to stand before men, and whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear—testify that it is even so. That which is to be both proclaimed and testified in obedience to the divine command is no mean matter. Hearken to it and take good heed, I beseech you.

And this is to be done "*unto the people*"—not to some few, but to all the people—to the Gentiles, to the nations. Wherever we go, this is to be part of our proclamation as the heralds of Christ, "Behold, he cometh to judge mankind." To you, my hearers, even to you is this word of warning sent. Will you not regard it?

Now, brethren, there is importance in this, not only according to the text, but from other reasons. If you think awhile you will see that it sheds a great light upon the future of the ungodly. Whatever you, my brother, choose to say of the wrath of God which is revealed concerning the impenitent, please think of this.

It may be, you feel troubled about its dread severity and eternity, but let this ease your perplexity, that the Judge upon whom the sentence depends is Jesus Christ, the Savior of men. I feel perfectly safe in leaving the future of the wicked in such hands as His, and however terrible may be His own words—and they are terrible to the last degree—about the future of the lost, I for one can never quarrel with *Him*.

If it were Moses that spoke, if he spoke for God, I dare not challenge him, yet there might be the temptation. But when *He* speaks who is the Son of man, let all the earth keep silence before Him. The severity which He exercises must be inevitable severity—you can be sure of that. If there be pain, and anguish, and wrath to every soul of man that does evil, then, since it is the Christ who will pronounce it, it will be because it must be, and cannot be helped, but must be so in the nature of things.

Therefore, we bow before this dreadful doctrine of Scripture, and instead of trying to quiet men in their sins, we know the terrors of the Lord, and we beseech them in Christ's stead that they be reconciled to God.

"Ye sinners, seek His face,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there."

Fly into the clefts of that rock which otherwise will grind you to powder when it falls upon you.

This doctrine too, that Christ is Judge, ought never to be forgotten, because it reflects great glory upon Him. Ah, sons of men, you may despise Him, but He is your Master after all. You may say, "Let us break his bands asunder and cast his cords from us," but JEHOVAH'S own decree has set Him as King upon His holy hill of Zion.

You may, if you will, bite your lips, and rage and rave against the incarnate God, Jesus our Lord and King, but you shall stand before Him, as surely as you live, to confess the blindness and the futility of your opposition, and to be made to bow your knees in terror, if you will not bend them now in reverence.

Yes, He is King. The world may say what it wills, and there may come darker times than these, but the lone star gleams afar with undying brightness—the Star of the morning which ushers in the eternal day. Jesus comes, and when He comes light breaks for all that are on His side—though the black and murky darkness of an endless night shall descend on all that are His foes.

I close by noticing that the importance of this doctrine is very great if we recollect its beneficial effect upon our everyday life. I constantly hear silly people, wicked persons, say, "Tell the people about something that has to do with today—about cleanliness and honesty, and all that."

As if we did not do that, and as if we were not the first to exhort men to fulfill all manner of social duties. Do we not bid them think on whatsoever things are pure, honest, temperate, and of good repute? But if I want men to live righteously, soberly, and honestly, I know of no motive that can have greater weight with them than this of a judgment to come.

Take that away from us, what have we to urge upon the sons of men at all? If they are to die like brutes, they will live like brutes. If there is no hereafter, they do well to say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." This, though it looks like a future thing, is one of the present-day questions of every hour.

You are stewards—you will have to give your account. Your Lord will come and question you as to your use of His goods. Will anybody in his senses tell me that this is unpractical? Surely every reasonable man will admit that for the promotion of right, and truth, and holiness, this is one of the most practical considerations that can possibly be found. If God will judge men at the last, it behooves men to see how they live today.

Another special benefit of this truth is its convincing and awakening power. Men tremble when they hear of judgment to come, and they are led to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" Men begin to confess their sin when they are told that the law by which they will be judged is spiritual, and reaches even to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

"Then," they say, "who can stand before His presence when once He is angry? If even to think an evil thought, or to lust an evil desire brings condemnation, who among us can stand when the heart-searching God shall sift the sons of men?" This is the reason why it ought to be preached, for only penitents convinced of sin are likely to accept the remission of sins. This is the plough which makes furrows for the good seed. This is the surgeon's knife which prepares for the reception of the healing balm.

And O, my brothers and sisters, you all know how quickening this doctrine is to Christians. We do not fear the day of judgment—we do not dread the thought of standing before our Lord Jesus because we have a plea which we know will answer every purpose. Our plea is this—we have been tried, condemned, and punished already.

Thou Judge of all, You know when we were tried, and judged, and condemned! Lo, in Your hands are the nail prints which are the witnesses that You did bear our sins in Your own body on the tree. Lo, at Your side You wear the ruby gem which tells how Your own heart made expiation for the guilt of all that trust in You.

We are not afraid, for there is no judgment for him who is judged already, no punishment for him who is punished already in a Substitute whom God has accepted. Yet this expectation of judgment quickens us to holy duty—we feel that since the Master comes, we would be as men that look for their Lord, and stand with our loins girded, doing service, expecting to hear His footstep at any moment.

"O watch and pray! The Judge is at the door,
Before His flaming bar thou soon must stand;
O watch! and keep thy garments spotless pure,
And thou shalt then be found at His right hand."

I shall be glad if any word that I have spoken upon this truth shall strike, and stick, and abide in your hearts—and make those think who have been most thoughtless concerning the world to come. Years ago a gentlewoman had been spending an afternoon at cards, and the evening at a ball, and such-like amusements.

She came home very late, and found that her maid-servant, who was sitting up waiting for her, was reading a book. "Ah," said she, "are you still poring over your dull books? They make you moping and melancholy." The lady retired to her chamber, but she slept not. In the night she was troubled, and fell a-weeping. Sleep forsook her. She tossed to and fro, and at length she called her maid.

She said, "Madam, what ails you? I thought I left you very merry and well." "Oh," said she, "but I looked over your book, and I only saw one word, but that word stings me. I cannot sleep. I cannot bear it." "What word was it, Madam?" "It was that word, 'ETERNITY.' Oh, maid," she said, "it is very well for me to sport and play, and waste my time as I have done, but oh, eternity, eternity, eternity! How can I face eternity?"

And so that night was turned to weeping and to prayer. I could wish the same might happen now to many of you. The Judge is at the door. Jesus comes to judge you—will you have Him now to be your Savior? If not, His coming will cause you to weep and wail—and that throughout eternity. Remember that word, ETERNITY.

God bless you all. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 10:24-48

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—346, 410, 364

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.