

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

NO. 391

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”
Revelation 20:4-6.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; 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.”
Revelation 20:12.

YOU will bear me witness, my friends, that it is exceedingly seldom I ever intrude into the mysteries of the future with regard either to the second advent, the millennial reign, or the first and second resurrection. As often as we come across it in our expositions, we do not turn aside from the point, but if guilty at all on this point, it is rather in being too silent than saying too much.

And now, in bringing forward this question this morning, I would say I do not do it to amuse your curiosity by novelty, or that I may pretend to have the true key of the prophecies which are as yet unfulfilled. I scarcely think it would be justifiable for me to spend my time upon prophetic studies for which I have not the necessary talent, nor is it the vocation to which my Master has ordained me. I think some ministers would do far more for the profit of God’s people if they would preach more about the first advent and less about the second.

But I have chosen this topic because I believe it has practical bearings, and may be made useful, instructive, and awakening to us all. I find that the most earnest of the Puritan preachers did not forbear to dwell upon this mysterious subject. I turn to Charnock, and in his disquisition upon the Immutability of God, he does not hesitate to speak of the conflagration of the world, of the millennial reign, and the new heavens and new earth.

I turn to Richard Baxter, a man who above all other men loved the souls of men, who more perhaps than any man with the exception of the apostle Paul, travailed in birth for souls, and I find him making a barbed arrow out of the doctrine of the coming of the Lord, and thrusting this great truth into the very heart and conscience of unbelievers, as though it were heaven’s own sword.

And John Bunyan too—plain, honest John—he who preached so simply that a child could comprehend him, and was certainly never guilty of having written upon his forehead the word, “Mystery” he, too, speaks of the advent of Christ, and of the glories which shall follow, and uses this doctrine as a stimulus to the saints, and as a warning to the ungodly.

I do not think therefore I need tremble very much if the charge should be brought against me of bringing before you an unprofitable subject. It shall profit if God shall bless the word, and if it be God’s Word, we may expect His blessing if we preach it all, but He will withdraw it if we refrain from

teaching any part of His council, because in our pretended wisdom we fancy that it would not have practical effect.

Now, my dear friends, in introducing again these texts to you, I shall just remark that in the first text which relates to the people of God, we have *three great privileges*. And in the second text, which relates to the ungodly who are not in covenant with Christ, we have *three great and terrible things* which may soon be perceived.

I. First of all, we will take the first text with its THREE PRIVILEGES.

“Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Before I proceed to enter into these privileges, I must remark that two modes of understanding this verse have been proposed, both of which I think are untenable. I have been reading carefully through Albert Barnes. He gives it, as his opinion, the first resurrection here spoken of is a *resurrection of principles*—a resurrection of the patience, the undaunted courage, the holy boldness and constancy of the ancient martyrs. He says these great principles have been forgotten, and as it were, buried, and that during the spiritual reign of Christ which is to come, these great principles will have a resurrection.

Now, I appeal to you, would you, in reading that passage, think this to be the meaning? Would any man believe that to be its meaning, if he had not some thesis to defend? The fact is, we sometimes read Scripture, thinking of what it ought to say, rather than what it does say. I do not hesitate to affirm that any simple-minded person who was intent upon discovering the mind of the Spirit, and not upon finding a method by which the words could be compelled to express his own mind, would say that the resurrection of principles, or the resurrection of doctrines, does not give the fair meaning of the words here stated.

Brethren, cannot you perceive at a glance that this is the resurrection of *men*? And is it not a literal resurrection, too? Does it not say, “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus”? Is it not written, “The rest of the dead lived not”? Does this mean the rest of the dead principles? The rest of the dead doctrines? You cannot so translate it. It is—we have no doubt whatever—a literal resurrection of the saints of God, and not of principles nor of doctrines.

But another interpretation has been proposed. I once had the misfortune to listen to an excellent friend of mine who was preaching upon this very text, and I must confess I did not attend with very great patience to his exposition. He said it meant blessed and holy is he that has been born-again, who has been regenerated, and so has had a resurrection from dead works by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All the while he was preaching, I could not help but wish that I could propose to him the difficulty to make this metaphorical interpretation agree with the literal fact, that the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished. For if the first resurrection here spoken of is a metaphorical, or spiritual, or typical resurrection, why the next where it speaks of the resurrection of the dead, must be spiritual, and mystical, and metaphorical too.

Now, no one would agree with this. When you read a chapter, you are not to say, “This part is a symbol, and is to be read so, and the next part is to be read literally.” Brethren, the Holy Spirit does not jumble metaphors and facts together. A typical book has plain indications that it is so intended, and when you come upon a literal passage in a typical chapter, it is always attached to something else which is distinctly literal, so that you cannot, without violence to common sense, make a typical meaning out of it.

The fact is, in reading this passage with an unbiased judgment, having no purpose whatever to serve, having no theory to defend—and I confess I have none, for I know but very little about mysteries to come—I could not help seeing there are *two literal resurrections* here spoken of, one of the spirits of the just, and the other of the bodies of the wicked—one of the saints who sleep in Jesus, whom God shall bring with *Him*, and another of those who live and die impenitent, who perish in their sins.

But this by way of preface to this first text. Let me now proceed. There are three privileges in the text.

1. Now as to the first privilege, *the priority of resurrection*. I think Scripture is exceedingly plain and explicit upon this point. You have perhaps imagined that all men will rise at the same moment, that the trumpet of the archangel will break open every grave at the same instant, and sound in the ear of every sleeper at the identical moment. Such I do not think is the testimony of the Word of God.

I think the Word of God teaches, and teaches indisputably, that the saints shall rise first. And be the interval of time whatever it may, whether the thousand years are literal years, or a very long period of time, I am not now about to determine. I have nothing to do except with the fact that there are two resurrections, a resurrection of the just, and afterwards of the unjust—a time when the saints of God shall rise, and an aftertime time when the wicked shall rise to the resurrection of damnation.

I shall now refer you to one or two passages in Scripture, and you will use your Bibles and follow me. First, let us look at the words of the apostle in that chapter which we use generally as a burial service, the first epistle to the Corinthians, 15:20-24, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”

There has been an interval of two thousand years between “Christ the first fruits,” and the “afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” Why not then a thousand years between that first resurrection and “the end”? Here is a resurrection of those who are Christ’s, and of them only. As for the wicked, one would scarce know that they would rise at all from this passage, if it were not for the general statement, “All shall be made alive.” And even this may not be so comprehensive as at first sight it seems. It is enough for me that there is here a particular and exclusive resurrection of those who are Christ’s.

Turn to another passage, which is perhaps plainer still, the first epistle to the Thessalonians, 4:13-17, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent,”—or have a preference beyond—“them who are asleep. 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: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Here is nothing said whatever about the resurrection of the wicked. It is only stated that the dead in Christ shall rise first. Our apostle is evidently speaking of a first resurrection, and since we know that a first resurrection implies a second, and since we know that the wicked dead are to rise as well as the righteous dead, we draw the inference that the wicked dead shall rise at the second resurrection, after the interval between the two resurrections shall have been accomplished.

Turn to Philippians 3, verses 8 and 10-11 and compare the two. “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

What does he mean there? Everyone will rise, no orthodox Christian doubts that. The doctrine of a general resurrection is received by all the Christian church. What, then, is this resurrection after which Paul was exerting himself, if by any means he might attain unto it? It could not be the general resurrection, he would attain unto that, live as he wish. It must have been some superior resurrection, of

which only those shall be partakers who have known Christ and the power of His resurrection, having been made conformable unto His death.

I think you cannot interpret this passage or give it any force of meaning, unless you admit that there is to be a prior resurrection of the just before the resurrection of the unjust. If you will turn to a passage in Luke 20:35-36, which probably is fresh upon your memories, you will find there something which I will venture to call a clear proof of a special resurrection.

The Sadducees had proposed a difficulty as to the relationship of men and women in the future state, and Jesus here says, "But they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

Now, brethren, there is some *worthiness* necessary for this resurrection. Do you not perceive it? There is some distinction involved in being called the children of the resurrection. Now, again I say, you do not doubt but that all shall rise. In that sense, then, every man would be one of the children of the resurrection. In that sense, no worthiness would be required for resurrection at all. There must be, then, a resurrection for which worthiness is needed, a resurrection which shall be a distinguished privilege, which, being obtained, shall confer upon its possessor the distinguished and honorable title of a "child of the resurrection." It seems to me that this is plain enough and can be put beyond all dispute.

In chapter 14 of the same Gospel, in verse 13-14, you have a promise made to those who, when they make a feast, do not do it with the intention of getting anything in return. "When you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." I would not insist upon it that this would prove that the just rose at a different time, but still there is to be a resurrection of the just, and on the other hand, there is to be a resurrection of the unjust, and the time of recompense for the righteous is to be the resurrection of the just, which is spoken of as being a particular period.

He might just as well have said, "You shall be recompensed at the general resurrection." There was no need to have said, "At the resurrection of the just," if the two are to happen at the same time. The words "of the just" are superfluous in the passage, unless they do refer to some era distinguished and distinct from the resurrection of the unjust. I will not say that this is any clear proof, but still, all these things put together, with other passages I might quote if time did not fail me, would, I think, establish upon a Scriptural basis the doctrine of the two resurrections.

But I would refer to one more, which seems to me to be exceedingly clear, in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54. In these verses the Savior four times over speaks of His own believing people, and promises them a resurrection. "I will raise him up at the last day." Now, is there any joy or beauty in this, to the people of God in particular, unless there is a specialty in it for them? It is the lot of all to rise, and yet we have here a privilege for the elect. Surely, brethren, there is a different resurrection.

Besides, there is yet a passage which now springs to my memory in Hebrews 11:35, where the apostle, speaking of the trials of the godly, and their noble endurance, speaks of them as, "not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection." The betterness was not in the after results of resurrection, but in the resurrection itself. How, then, could it be a better resurrection, unless there is some distinction between the resurrection of the saint, and the resurrection of the sinner? Let the one be a resurrection of splendor, let the other be a resurrection of gloom and horror, and let there be a marked division between the two, that as it was in the beginning, it may be even to the end, the Lord has put a difference between him that fears God and him who fears Him not.

I am well aware that I have not been able to put the argument so well but that any antagonist may quibble at it, but I have been preaching to my own congregation rather than fighting with opponents, and I hope you will take these passages and weigh them for yourselves, and if they do not teach you that the dead in Christ shall rise first, do not believe me if I say they do. If you cannot perceive the fact yourself, if the Holy Spirit show it not unto you, why then, read the passage again, and then find if you can find another and a better meaning.

I have no purpose to serve except to make the Scripture as plain to you as possible. And I say it yet again, I have not the shadow of a doubt in my own soul that these passages do teach us that there shall first of all be a resurrection concerning which it shall be said, “Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection; on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

2. I now pass on to the second privilege here promised to the godly. *The second death on them has no power.* This, too, is a literal death, none the less literal because its main terror is spiritual, for a spiritual death is as literal as a carnal death. The death which shall come upon the ungodly without exception can never touch the righteous.

Oh, brethren, this is the best of all. As for the first resurrection, if Christ has granted that to His people there must be something glorious in it if we cannot perceive it. “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know when He shall appear we shall be like *him*.” I think the glories of the first resurrection belong to the glories which shall be revealed *in* us rather than the glories that are revealed *to* us.

What shall be the majesty of that form in which we shall rise? What is the distinguished happiness we shall then enjoy? We can but guess at a distance, we cannot know it to the full. But on this point we can understand what Scripture states, and understand this much well, that damnation, the second death shall have no power on those who rise at the first resurrection. How should it? How can damnation fall on any but those who are sinners and are guilty of sin?

And the saints are not guilty of sin. They have sinned like others, and they were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But their sin has been lifted from them, it was laid upon the scapegoat’s head of old. He, the eternal substitute, even our Lord Jesus, carried all their guilt and their iniquity into the wilderness of forgetfulness, where it shall never be found against them forever. They wear the Savior’s righteousness, even as they have been washed in His blood, and what wrath can lie on the man who is not only guiltless through the blood, but is meritorious through imputed righteousness?

Oh, arm of Justice, you are nerveless to smite the blood-washed! Oh, you flames of hell, how could even so much as the breath of your heat pass upon the man who is safe covered in the Savior’s wounds! How is it possible for you, O Deaths, Destructions, Horrors, Glooms, Plagues, and Terrors, so much as to flit like a cloud over the serene sky of the spirit which has found peace with God through the blood of Christ! No, brethren,

***“Bold shall I stand in that great day;
For who ought to my charge shall lay?
While, through Thy blood, absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”***

There shall be a second death, but over us it shall have no power. Do you understand the beauty of the picture? As if we might walk through the flames of hell and they should have *no power* to devour us any more than when the holy children paced with ease over the hot coals of Nebuchadnezzar’s seven-times heated furnace. Death may bend his bow and fit the arrow to the string, but we laugh at you, O Death! And you, O hell, we will despise! for over both of you, enemies of man, we shall be more than conquerors through Him that has loved us. We shall stand invulnerable and invincible, defying and laughing to scorn our every foe. And all this because we are washed from sin and covered with a spotless righteousness.

But there is another reason why the second death can have no power on the believer, because when the prince of this world comes against us, we shall be able to say what our Master did, “He has nothing in me.” When we shall rise again, we shall be freed from all corruption, no evil tendencies shall remain in us. “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the LORD dwells in Zion.” “Without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing” without even the shadow of a spot which the eye of omniscience could

discover, we shall be as pure as Adam before his fall, as holy as the immaculate manhood when it first came from the divine hand.

We shall be better than Adam, for Adam might sin, but we shall be so established in goodness, in truth, and in righteousness, that we shall not even be tempted again, much less shall we have any fear of falling. We shall stand spotless and faultless at the last great day. Brethren, lift up your heads. Contending with sin, cast down with doubts, lift up your heads and wipe the tears from your eyes. There are days coming, the like of which angels have not seen, but you shall see them. There are times coming when your spirits shall no more fear the chain, nor shall you even remember the wormwood and the gall.

*“What, though your inbred sins require
Your flesh to see the dust;
Yet as the Lord your Savior rose
So all His followers must.”*

And when they rise they shall leave the old Adam behind them. Blessed day! One of the most blessed parts of heaven—of heaven above or of heaven below—will be freedom from the tendency to sin, a total death to that old nature which has been our plague and woe.

3. There is yet a third privilege in the text, upon which I shall speak but briefly. I believe this to be also one of the glories that shall be revealed. The third privilege of the text is, *“They shall reign with him a thousand years.”* Here is another point upon which there has been a long and very vigorous contention. It was believed in the early church, I do not know whether there is any Scriptural foundation for the precise date they fixed, that the seventh thousand years of the world’s history would be a Sabbath. That as there were six days of toil in the week, and the seventh was a day of rest, so the world would have six thousand years of toil and sorrow, and the seventh thousand would be a thousand years of rest. I say I do not know that there is any Scripture for that, I do know that there is none against it.

I believe the Lord Himself shall come, “But of that day, and of that hour knows no man, no not even the angels of God.” And I think it is idle to attempt to fix the year or even the century when Christ shall come. Our business is to expect Him always, to be always looking for His appearing, watching for His coming, that whether He comes at cock-crow, or midnight, or at morning watch, we may be ready to go in with the wise virgins into the marriage feast, and to rejoice with our Beloved.

If there have been any dates given, I am not able at present to find them. All these dates and mysteries I can leave to much more learned men, and men who give their whole time to it. The book of Revelation needs another expounder besides those who have loaded our shelves until they groan, for they have generally made confusion worse confounded. Their expositions have been rather “an obviation” than a revelation. They have rather darkened counsel by words without knowledge than made the dark things plain.

I am prepared to go about as far as my predecessor Dr. Gill went, as far as the old fathers of the church went, as far as Baxter and Bunyan would have gone, but to go no further than that. Yet I think we may say this morning, there it is in our text a distinct promise that the saints are to reign with Christ a thousand years, and I believe they are to reign with Him *upon this earth*.

There are some passages which I think obtain a singular fullness of meaning if this be true. Turn to Psalm 37:10-11. It is that Psalm where David has been fretting himself, because of the evildoers and their prosperity upon the earth. He says, “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” You can interpret that to mean that the meek man shall enjoy much more of this world’s goods than the sinner, and that he shall have abundance of peace. But I think you have given it a lean meaning, a very lean meaning indeed.

If it is true that these meek ones shall yet possess this very earth, and that here, in the abundance of peace through the Messiah’s reign, they shall rejoice in it, I think you have found a fuller meaning, and

one which has a God-like meaning. So it is that God's promises always have a wider meaning than we can conceive. Now, in this case, if it only means that the meek are to have what they gain in this life, which is very little indeed, if they are only to have what they enjoy here upon earth, which is so little, that I think if in this life only they have hope, they are of men the most miserable—if it only means that, then the promise means less than we might conceive it to mean. But if it means that they shall have glory even here, then you have given to it one of the widest meanings you can conceive, a meaning like the meanings usually given to the promises of God—wide, large, extensive, and worthy of Himself.

Brethren, the meek do not inherit the earth to any great degree at present, and we look for this in another age. Let me quote the language of Christ, lest you should think this passage peculiar to the Old Testament dispensation, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." How? Where? When? Not now, certainly, not in Christ's days, not in apostolic times by any means. What did the meek inherit, brethren? The stake, flames, racks, pincers, dungeons. Their inheritance, indeed, was nothing. They were destitute, addicted, tormented. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, and if the meek are ever to inherit the earth, certainly it must be in some age to come, for they have never inherited it yet.

Turn again to a passage in Revelation 5:9-10, "And they sung a new song." It is the very song we sang this morning, and it runs thus, "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign *on the earth*." Whether anyone disputes the genuineness of these words, I do not know, but if they mean anything at all, if the Holy Spirit meant to set forth any meaning, surely it must have been that the people of Christ shall reign upon the earth.

Besides, remember our Savior's words in Matthew 19:28-29, where in answer to a question which had been put by Peter as to what His saints should have as the result of their losses for His sake, He said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that you which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

It seems that Christ here is to come in the regeneration, when in a newborn world there shall be joys fitted for the newborn spirits and then there shall be splendors and glories for the apostles first, and for all those who by any means have suffered any losses for Christ Jesus. You find such passages as these in the Word of God, "The LORD of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." You find another like this in Zachariah, "My God shall come with the multitude of his saints." Indeed, I could not now take up your time by quoting many passages in which it seems to me that nothing but the triumph on the very spot where they have fought the battle, nothing but the glory in the very place where they have had the tug of war, will meet the meaning of God's Word.

I do look forward to this with joy, that though I may sleep in Christ before my Master come, and I know not whether that shall be or no, yet I shall rise at the day of His appearing, and shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just if I have truly and faithfully served Him, and that recompense shall be, to be made like unto Him, and to partake of His glories before the eyes of men, and to reign with Him during the thousand years. Dr. Watts, I believe, understood that Christ is to come literally, for he says,

*"Nor does it yet appear
How great we must be made;
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head.*

*A hope so much divine
May trials well endure,*

*May purge our souls from sense and sin
As Christ the Lord is pure."*

But to gather up what I have said, and to make one other observation. This doctrine which I have preached just now is not an unpractical one. For throughout the New Testament, whenever the apostle wants to stir up men to patience, to labor, to hope, to endurance, to holiness, he generally says something about the advent of Christ. "Be patient, brethren," says he, "for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." "Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand." "Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come." "When the great Shepherd shall appear, you also shall appear with him in glory."

Brethren, I think we shall do wrong if we make too much of this, but we shall do equally wrong if we make too little of it. Let us give it a fair place in our thoughts, and especially let those of us who fear God, and believe in Jesus take this to be a window through which we can look, when the house is dark and our home is full of misery. Let us look to the time when we shall rise among the first, following Christ the first fruits, when we shall reign with Christ, sharing in His glories and when we shall know that the second death over us has no power.

II. I shall now turn to the second part of the discourse briefly. To the ungodly **THREE THINGS IN SIMPLICITY.**

Sinner, you have heard us speak of the resurrection of the righteous. To you the word "resurrection" has no music. There is no flash of joy in your spirit when you hear that the dead shall rise again. But oh, I pray you lend me your ears while I assure you in God's name that you shall rise. Not only shall your soul live—you have perhaps become so brutish that you forget you have a soul—but your body itself shall live.

Those eyes that have been full of lust shall see sights of horror. Those ears which have listened to the temptations of the evil one, shall hear the thunders of the day of judgment. Those very feet that bare you to the theater, shall attempt, but utterly fail to sustain you when Christ shall sit in judgment. Think not when your body is put into the soil, that you have done with it. It has been partner with your soul in sin, it shall be sharer with your soul in the punishment. He is able to cast both body and soul into hell. The heathens believe in the immortality of the soul. We need not therefore prove what a heathen could conceive. It is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body which is peculiar to Christianity.

You are not prepared to cast away the revelation of God I know. You receive that book as being God's book, and it tells me that all the dead, both small and great, shall rise. When the archangel's trumpet shall sound, the whole of the old inhabitants of the world before the flood shall rise out of the ocean. The buried palaces, the sunken homes, shall all give up the multitude who once married and were given in marriage, until Noah entered into the ark.

Up shall rise from the great deeps of the fathomless sea, thousands upon thousands of men who have slept now these three and four thousand years. Every churchyard, too, where men have been quietly buried with Christian rites, but yet were unchristian still, shall yield up its dead. The battlefield shall yield a mighty harvest, a harvest which was sown in blood, and which shall be reaped in tempest. Every place where man has lived and man has died shall see the dying quickened once again, and flesh and blood once more instinct with life. But the main thing with you is that *you* will be there. Living and dying as you now are, ungodly and unconverted, the most awful curse that could fall on you with the exception of the damnation of your soul, is the sure and certain resurrection of your body.

Go, now, and paint it, if you will, and seek a beauty which the worm shall loathe. Go and pamper your body, drink the sweet, and eat the fat. Go and luxuriate and indulge it in ease. Oh, sir, you may well pamper your bodies, for there is short enough time for your body to have mirth in, and when that short time is over, you shall drink another wine—the dregs of the cup of God's wrath, which the wicked shall drain to the last drop.

Satisfy your ears with music now, you shall soon hear nothing but the howling of the damned! Go your way eat, drink, and be merry, but for all these the Lord shall bring you into judgment—sevenfold for all your sinful pleasures, yea, seventy times seven, for all your joys of lust and wickedness, and crime, shall the Lord be avenged on you in the great and terrible day of His wrath. Sinner, think you of this, and when you sin, think of the resurrection.

But after the resurrection, according to the text, comes *the judgment*. You have cursed God. The oath died away. No, sir, it did not, it imprinted itself upon the great book of God's remembrance. You have entered the chamber of wantonness, or the hall of infidelity, you have walked through the stews of crime, and through the stench and filth of the brothel. You have wandered into sin, and plunged into it, thinking it would all die with the day, that as the night covers up the sights of the day, so the night of death should cover up the deeds of your day of life. Not so.

The books shall be opened. I think I see your blanching cheeks closing your eyes because you dare not look upon the Judge when He opens that page where stands your history. I hear you sinner, boldest among you all. He is crying, "You rocks, fall on me." There they stand, sublime and dread, those granite rocks, he would rather be crushed than stand there before the avenging eye. But the mountains will not loosen, their flinty bowels feel no pangs of sympathy, they will not move. You stand while the fiery eye look you through and through, and the dread voice reads on, and on, and on, your every act, and word, and thought.

I see you as the shameful crimes are read, and men and angels hear. I see your horror as a nameless deed is told in terms explicit, which none can misunderstand. I hear your thoughts brought out—that lust, that murder which was in the thought, but never grew into the deed. And you are all this while astonished like Belshazzar, when he saw the writing on the wall, and his loins were loose, and he was terribly afraid. So shall it be with you, and yet again, and again, and again, shall you send up that awful shriek, "Hide us! Hide us from the face of Him who sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

But then comes the end, the last of all. After death the judgment, after judgment *the damnation*. If it be a dreadful thing to live again, if it be a more dreadful thing still to spend the first day of that life in the grand judgment of God, how much more awful shall it be when the sentence is pronounced, and the terror of punishment shall begin! We believe that the souls of the wicked are already tormented, but this judgment will cast both body and soul into the lake of fire.

Men and women, you who fear not God, and have no faith in Jesus, I cannot picture to you damnation. Across it let me draw a curtain. But though we must not picture it, I pray you realize it. When Martin has painted some of his sublime pictures, he has generally heightened the effect by masses of darkness. Surely this is the way in which God has painted hell, rather by masses of darkness than by definiteness of light.

This much we know, that hell is a place of absence from God—a place for the development of sin, where every passion is unbridled, every lust unrestrained—a place where God punishes night and day those who sin night and day—a place where there is never sleep, or rest or hope—a place where a drop of water is denied, though thirst shall burn the tongue—a place where pleasure never breathed, where light never dawned, where anything like consolation was never heard of—a place where the Gospel is denied, where mercy droops her wings and dies—a place where vengeance reigns, and shakes his chains, and brandishes his sword—a place of fury and of burning—a place, the like of which, imagination has not pictured.

May God grant it may be a place which you shall never see, and whose dread you shall never feel. Sinner, instead of preaching it to you, let me bid you fly from it. Die, sinner, and flight from hell becomes impossible, you are lost, then, eternally. Oh, while yet you are on praying ground, I pray you, think on your end. "Because she remembered not her latter end, she came down wonderfully." Let it not be said thus of you.

Think! Think! This warning may be the last you shall ever hear. You may never be spared to come to a place of worship again. Perhaps, while you sit here, the last sands are dropping from the hour glass and then no more warning can be given, because redemption and escape shall be impossible to you.

Soul, I lift up before you now, Christ the crucified one, “Whosoever believes on him shall never perish, but have eternal life.” As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so this morning the Son of man is lifted up. Sinner, see His wounds. Look to His thorn-crowned head. See the nails of His hands and of His feet. Do you perceive Him? Hark! while He cries, “Why have you forsaken me?” Listen again while He says, “It is finished! It is finished!” Salvation finished!

And now, salvation is freely preached to you. Believe on Christ, and you shall be saved. Trust Him, and all the horrors of the future shall have no power over you, but the splendors of this prophecy shall be fulfilled, be they what they may. Oh, that this morning some of you may trust my Master for the first time in your lives. And this done, you need not curiously inquire what the future shall be, but you may sit down calmly, and say, “Come when it will, my soul is on the rock of ages. It fears no ill, it fears no tempest, it defies all pain. Come quickly! Come quickly! Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.”

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.