

JUDGMENT BEGUN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD!

Rev. Joseph H. Smith.

When Jesus, answering the question put to him, "Whether there be few that are saved?" said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," he must have made a deep impression, at least upon Peter's mind. For now these years later, when his own race is near run, his own life and ministry near ended, he sounds the echo of the same truth in his first Epistle the fourth Chapter and 28th verse. "If the righteous scarcely be saved where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Indeed, all he is saying along here accents our Lord's command that we "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." It does look indeed as if the race were not half run nor the prize near won when once we are fairly started in this way. If any one of the apostles at all might have been claimed by our "once in grace always in grace" friends, it would at times seem to be Peter when he talks about being "predestinated," "thereunto appointed," etc. Yet no one talks more strongly than he of a backslider as a turning again of "the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," "the dog is turned to his own vomit again." And the man that has lost knowledge of sins forgiven as having "forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

And now here he is talking of a Judgment of Christians. It does sound strange to those of us who know that in some great, good sense our judgment is passed upon Him. That 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' And it would be strange and inexplicable indeed if it were not so that Christians, too, are held on probation. And this probation of Christians involves:

- Their siftings of wheat from chaff.
- Their testing to prove their graces.
- Their chastening to correct their errors.
- Their schooling in discipline to deepen and train their motives.
- Their suffering of consequence to arouse them to their deficiencies and sometimes even:
- Their punishment to rebuke their presumptions.

Now nothing we find suggested in Peter's references to present time sufferings of believers is to be so interpreted or construed so as to weaken what he, with all other Bible writers, teaches of a future, final day of Judgment when men "shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." (v. 5). No! From Genesis to Revelation one clear, long, strong note is sounded that "the Lord will come with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment. That for all these things, good and evil, we will be brought into judgment. That for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of Judgment; that "God hath appointed a day in which he shall judge all men in righteousness by that man Jesus." "That we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." "That every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is for the day will declare it." And it is evident that no judicial factors

or elements in Providence can suspend the great Judgment Day. No man's wickedness or righteousness can be fully recompensed or rewarded here. All will be hereafter. "His reward is with him."

But there are examples and earnestness of the Judgment now. The judgment and destruction of the ante-diluvian flood was an earnest of the yet future, final and full dissolution of the world by fire in the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Though, as Jesus shows Sodom and Gomorrah are yet to appear in the day of Judgment yet they in some considerable though limited sense have already "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire." The desolations that are now upon the earth, in war and famine and pestilence, with a hundred kindred miseries are not by mere accident or mere sequence. They have moral as well as political cause and there is a judicial—a penally judicial hand in the divine government that permits them. In speaking of these very things our Lord says, "The end is not yet." "These are the beginnings of sorrows."

Likewise then, there is a judicial, a chastening, a semi-final, an admonitory touch of the Divine finger in some of the losses, some of the crashes, some of the sufferings, the sorrows and the distresses which are befalling many of God's people. Distresses and desolations both spiritual and material, in homes, and estates, and bodies too. We would escape quite a little that we pass under of the rod of God if we were better behaved children of His.

And there too, are samples, earnestness, foretastes, and premonitions of the coming Judgment.

It behooves us then to be exercised—exercised with prayer, heart searching, prompt self-amendment under every trial and every suffering.

It behooves us to note that as these trials and sorrows may show us things about ourselves we had not known nor suspected, so the coming Judgment will reveal us through and through.

It behooves us also to consider that as certain grace and standing is now requisite to enable us pass through the testings and sufferings of time so certain grace and standing will be imperatively necessary for all Christians at the day of final accounts and decrees.

1. He must appear with a present, up-to-date pardon in his hand.
2. He must be standing four square upon a Sermon on the Mount foundation.
3. He must be standing having on a wedding garment.
4. He must be standing with his vessel full of the oil of the Spirit.—Heart and Life.

"Criticism is god for me. No matter whether it comes from saint, or sinner, friend or foe, I need criticism. And no matter whether I like it or not, I need it. I need reproof and correction, too, for I am too blind to see my own faults; others must see them for me."

Think of a half dead man preaching holiness! "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—Eph. 5-14.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND OURS.

The resurrection of Christ is the key-stone of the plan of redemption. The advent, the atonement, and the resurrection compose a blessed trinity.

The prominent thought of most people in connection with the account of the resurrection is the tomb; but if the account is carefully read it will be discovered that the tomb was in a garden. This is usually lost sight of, but it really is an important part of the story and one which will well repay our consideration. The Gospel has made a garden out of a wilderness. It is the story of the open tomb that has made the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. When Christ was laid in the tomb the seed was sown, but on the third day the seed showed its vitality and life by springing up to new beauty and grace. The Easter occasion is the time above all others when Christians rejoice because of this garden of exquisite loveliness.

It was morning in the garden when Christ came forth from the tomb. Beauty and fragrance met His glance as He stepped forth as the Saviour of the world. The night had been very dark, but the light begins to break, and by the time the sorrowing women sought the tomb they found the garden flooded with light and glory of the coming day. Christ's resurrection meant the dawning of a better hope in the dark night of the world's sin and despair. Slowly its beams have been spreading over the earth, seeking out and banishing the shadows from the dark corners of "earth's remotest bounds," and soon the full glorious day will burst upon the startled world when the Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth in all His splendor, in which Christ shall be the central figure and by which the darkness of sin will be forever banished.

It is spring time when we celebrate the resurrection of the world's Redeemer. The first green blades have made their appearance and the early spring 'flowers have begun to bloom. And so it is in the heart and life in which Christ has risen to be Lord and King, the death and winter of a sinful life disappears before the warmth and revivification of eternal spring. And the beauty and fragrance and springing life of the springtime of the soul will be but first fruits of a life of glorious fullness and fruitage.

But angels complete the beauty of the picture. Christ the central figure which transforms a burying ground into a garden, the morning of hope and the springtime of life eternal, and angel messengers and helpers to roll back the stones of doubt and difficulty and fill the new day with glorious possibility—that is the true significance of the resurrection!—Wesleyan Methodist.

"Creed without deed is useless. Emotion without motion is null and void. To hold a service and not to do a service is folly. The Word must become flesh. Doctrines must be incarnated. The tree must be vindicated by its fruit."

No one but yourself can make your life beautiful, no one can be pure, honorable, and loving for you.—J. R. Miller.