

A FEW
PLAIN WORDS
ON THE
DAY OF JUDGMENT,
BY
SIR CHARLES BRENTON.

FOURTH EDITION.

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INTRODUCTION.

The author of the following little Tract would warn his readers not to expect an elaborate defence of the Premillennial Advent or the First Resurrection. This task has been performed, and he believes successfully performed by others. His object has been not so much to *prove* the doctrine of the Millennium (assuming it to be capable of proof) as to *state* it. And that for the following reason. He believes that among the various opponents of the doctrine, there are some whose opposition results chiefly from ignorance, and such ignorance as may be traced to the inattention of a mind not only well informed on other subjects, but even conversant with scripture. Sound views (to a certain extent) of evangelical truth are compatible not only with ignorance of the grounds of belief in the doctrine of a millennium, but even with ignorance of the doctrine itself.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

ONE grand point of Christian intelligence is "to know the time." They that had understanding of the times, were such as "knew what Israel ought to do." I Chron. xii. 32.

Even in the world we find that the knowledge of time enters into all business and all science. The husbandman must attend to the revolution of the seasons, the man of business must be punctual if he would not bring his affairs to ruin, the man of letters knows that history is unintelligible without chronology.

In the study of scripture it is not otherwise. There is a time for all things, Eccles. iii. even for every purpose under heaven, however worldly men may despise this truth, or abuse it, or wrest it to their own destruction.*

But however important even the subdivisions of time in Scripture are in their place, the grand distinction is to be made between Man's Day and God's Day. See I. Cor. iv. 3. Gr. Man's day is emphatically *night*. It extends from the time of the entrance of sin and death into the world, to the second coming of the Lord. God's day is a period of light, liberty and *judgment*. To this day the children of God are blessedly *akin*. They are light in the Lord and have a sympathy in their new nature with all that is pure, all that is holy, and all that is candid. They come to the light that their deeds

* Worldly men who make a profane application of the truth "There is a time for all things," would do well to remember "There is a time to be cast into hell."

may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. They love light for it is their element. They "look for and haste unto" this day instinctively, and as a matter of course, drawn by the simple force of spiritual attraction. Man's day has nearly run its course. The darkness is passing away, (see I. John ii. 8. Gr.) the true light now shines or dawns. What takes place at the beginning, during the continuance, and at the end of this day? The following few pages contain an attempt to answer this question. To some readers of Scripture it would appear that in the predicted judgment of mankind, God has specified several distinct parts, not to say successive stages.

The popular view is that these several parts coincide in one. That the Lord comes and yet scarcely comes at all. That His very coming is figurative. That saints and sinners, quick and dead, Jews and Gentiles, the Church and the world, stand at the bar of God together, that the Day of the Lord is twelve, or at the most, twenty-four hours long, that the great drama of Judgment consists of but one act. It is of course quickly terminated, and then the eternal state begins. To say that there was *no truth* in the above scheme, would be to go too far, it would be more than we could say of Popery or Mahometanism itself. Mahomet maintained the unity of God, and Popery acknowledges the Trinity and the Incarnation.

But as a *system* opposed to what are commonly called millennarian views, I believe it to be fundamentally unsound, and with this conviction, I would propose a very different theory.

I would first remark, that while it is the glory of God that He acts simply and that His operations appear in contrast with the "complex works of man," yet it will not follow that we appreciate at the first glance the real simplicity of the divine procedure. What may be said of divine order, is true of divine simplicity. Both the one and the other are often the opposite of man's substitute for them. God's wisdom is man's foolishness, God's regularity is man's disorder.

The Judgment then, which according to many, appears one indivisible act, resolves itself (in my view) into four distinct parts, which we may thus characterise:—

I. The Judgment of the Church.

II. The Judgment of the Quick.

III. The Continuous Judgment (or Reign) of the Lord and His Church during One Thousand Years.

IV. The Judgment of the Dead.

I have assigned the first place to the Judgment of the Church, because so far as it can be said to take place at all, it has a precedence in time. Our best way of ascertaining what it is, will be to find out what it is *not*, and therefore we will first examine the three remaining cases. We proceed then at once to examine the second case, or the

JUDGMENT OF THE QUICK.

I believe this to be the Judgment of the living Gentiles. Let us look a little into the special wording of Matt. xxv., and some passages in the Old Testament to which it most probably refers. First let it be remarked that this account of the Judgment is found in the Gospel of Matthew, which has evidently a Jewish aspect, and if so, the Gentiles will naturally be brought in by reason of their relation to the Jews, just as when it is a question of the Church, not the Gentiles, but the *world*, would be named as their enemies. There is first of all an evident reference to Joel iii. 11. "Assemble yourselves and come all ye *heathen*," (living nations or Gentiles, Gr. the very word translated nation in Matthew) "and gather yourselves together roundabout, thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen (nations or Gentiles) be awakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat (or Judgment of the Lord) for there will I sit to judge all the heathen (Gentiles) roundabout."

The commencement of this chapter also favors this view. "For behold, in those days and in that time when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and

Jerusalem I will also gather all the heathen (Gentiles or nations) and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat (the Judgment of the Lord) and will plead with them there for His people and His heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted his land."

The same words are repeated in verses 11, 12. In verse 4, an interesting coincidence is apparent. Tyre, Sidon, and the coasts of Palestine (which we may fairly take like Edom for representatives of the Gentiles) are rebuked for acting against God, when they thought they were dealing with man. "What have ye to do with ME? will ye render ME a recompense? and if ye recompense ME, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head, Ye have taken *my* silver and *my* gold," &c. Surely there is a striking coincidence between this and what is said in Matt. xxv. 40., "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto ME."

But this is not the only coincidence we have to remark. Other Old Testament Scriptures enable us to complete the picture. In Ezekiel xxxv. we read "And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I judge between cattle and cattle, between the *lambs* and the *he-goats*." It would appear from this chapter in Ezekiel, that the he-goats are Gentile lords ruling over the Jews the sheep. Jeremiah tells us "Many pastors, (*i. e.* shepherds or rulers) have destroyed my vineyard." Zechariah tells us "I was angry with the *shepherds* and I punished the *goats*." An inattentive reader might confound this sentence with "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not *both* fall into the ditch?"

But looking at it in connection with the passages quoted in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, it would seem rather to mean "I was angry with the shepherds and I punished the shepherds."

A powerful confirmation of this view is found in the two-fold use in both the Old and New Testaments of the Greek word ποιμαίνειν, to do the office of, or tend like a shepherd. The following instances will suffice. John

xxi. 16. "*Feed my sheep.*" I. Peter v. 2. "*Feed the flock of God.*" Revelation ii. 27. "*He shall rule them with a rod of iron.*"

I would next consider the third case, (*i. e.*)

THE CONTINUOUS JUDGMENT (OR REIGN) OF THE LORD AND HIS CHURCH DURING ONE THOUSAND YEARS.

This is judgment in a peculiar sense, (*i. e.*) civil or political judgment contrasted with that which is strictly judicial. In this sense the judges judged Israel.

It may tend to lessen the difficulty which many find in receiving the doctrine of the millennium, if we notice a threefold distinction frequently lost sight of, or perhaps never thought of at all. I mean

I. The present state of the earth, during which righteousness neither reigns nor dwells.

II. The second, the next or millennial state in which righteousness reigns, but does not *dwell*.

III. The post-millennial state in which there will be a new heaven and a new earth, in which *dwelleth* righteousness.

Now if the above division is a scriptural one, we can understand the importance of the millennial reign. It has a character peculiar to itself. It is unlike the first state, because there is power to correct evil. It is unlike the last, because there is evil to correct. In the first or present state, there is not power, though a Christian prince might have the will. The case will become clearer if we illustrate the second state by contrast with the third, and the third by a reference to Heaven. In Heaven God's will is done perfectly, or the Lord would not in the days of His flesh have dictated a prayer to His disciples, in which they were told to ask that God's will might be done on earth, as it was in Heaven. In Heaven then, there is no correction of evil, because there is no evil to correct. So in the third state or that of the post-millennial earth. But in the intermediate or millennial dispensation there is

evil. Many would find the doctrine of the millennium divested of much difficulty, if they would bear in mind that it is a period of extensive but *imperfect* blessedness. In the present state of things happiness is the exception, misery the rule. In the millennial state, happiness will be the rule, misery the exception. In the final state, there will be happiness and godliness *without exception*.

The fourth case is that of

THE JUDGMENT OF THE DEAD.

We now enter upon the scene in which the popular view approaches most nearly to the scriptural one (i.e.) that of the grand assize in which the *dead* are judged according to their works. Here however one element of the popular theory is wanting—the judgment of the *Quick*. These were disposed of long before. The Scripture account is clear and simple. Rev. xx. 11. “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, 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. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” It would seem that this passage so clear and so well known, needs little comment. That the *dead* will be judged according to their *works*, is perhaps with most, the one absorbing idea of judgment, into which almost all other ideas of a judicial process, all Scripture doctrines on the subject, are finally resolved. The “quick” are incorporated with them and supposed to be not only dealt with on the same principle, but judged at the same time.

After this brief survey of the three other judgments of which the subjects are the Quick, the millennial earth, and the Dead respectively, I now return to that which is perhaps the most commonly misinterpreted, viz.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH.

It is vain to deny that the Church will be judged. All the efforts made to set this aside, only end where efforts made against Scripture must end—in failure and confusion. The Scriptures cannot be broken. The word of God must be fulfilled. “It is hard to kick against the pricks.”

We must again distinguish between different *kinds* of judgment, and most of the difficulty will vanish. I would therefore remark,

I. The saints *have been* judged.

II. The saints *are now* under judgment.

III. The saints *will be* judged.

I need hardly add that the strictest and most important meaning is that which I have placed first. The saints *have been* judged. They were judged in Christ. They were judged in His judgment, crucified on His cross, died in His death, rose in his resurrection, and shall never come into condemnation, nay, nor into judgment either in the judicial or proper sense. The case is very simple. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Every sinner either has died, or has to die. But saints are sinners who have died in Christ. “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Or as it might be rendered, “He that has died is justified from sin.” A justified person is one whom God will neither condemn nor *judge*. In this sense we are most fully agreed with those who say that the Church has done with judgment, that as God is faithful, the saints never will and never *can* be judged.

But if so, in what sense are the saints *now* under judgment? One judgment is past, another is to come, what is that kind of judgment to which the saints are subjected *at present*? When we say that present judgment is nearly the same thing as righteous church disci-

pline, we state nearly the whole case, and a glance at the Epistles and the Revelation confirms this view. Fatherly correction (a privilege unbelievers are excluded from) the actings of the Son of Man in the midst of the golden candlesticks—of the Son of God as rightful head over his own house—the judgment exercised by saints themselves (under Christ) in putting away evil from the house of God—these are scripture representations of *present* judgment. Judgment in this sense (though not in this only) begins at the house of God—the very condition of the world is that it is not under *actual* judgment, though under wrath and under the sure sentence of judgment to come.

We now come to the difficulty, with many perhaps the great difficulty of all—the *future* judgment of the Church of God. Let us deal fairly and candidly with the question, we admit there is a difficulty in the case. It is a paradox, but not a contradiction, *i. e.* it is a seeming contradiction of the truth, but not a *real* one. That a crowned king, a white-robed priest, a loved child of the Father, a conqueror and more than conqueror over the world—that such a one should have to descend from a throne and stand as a criminal at the bar, his very life hanging in doubt before him,—is this the teaching of the Holy Ghost. It is *not* the teaching of the Holy Ghost? Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ, or Christianity either. But we do learn what the unlearned and unstable may be easily led to *confound* with the above monstrous supposition. We learn for instance that a soul may be saved so as by fire. Here then we have salvation and loss brought into close contact. Nay, the fire is the very fire of the *Day*, the Day of Judgment burning up the wood, hay, stubble, of those who on the one hand were the objects of the eternal love of God, the sheep for whom Christ died, and who on the other, did works worthy not merely of rebuke, but of utter destruction. Still it is the *work* and not the workman that is destroyed. But the destruction of his *work*, is in a certain sense judgment to himself. He loses neither his saintship nor his

salvation, but he does not receive the "full reward" he would otherwise receive. Again II. Cor. v. 10. "*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.*" It is *impossible* without the most violent distortion of the text, to say that it means only the judgment of the wicked here. It may be that the word 'appear' in this verse is not to be taken in a forensic sense, as if we were speaking of a modern court of justice, but as signifying to be 'manifested.' Still it is manifestation connected with judgment. We shall better understand the question of the judgment of the Church, if we consider in what *capacity* a saint will be judged. Certainly not as a culprit. Certainly not as a member of Christ, whose salvation is uncertain. We might as well think of Christ being judged Himself. But a saint will be judged as a *servant*, as one whose Lord gave him a charge, saying, "Occupy till I come." The Lord will reckon with His servants and give them a reward proportionate to their work. In *life* the saints are equal. In sonship they are equal. In the reward of service they will *not* be equal, and this perhaps we may call the sum total of their future judgment.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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