

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE JUDGMENT

BY DR. THOMAS'S DAUGHTER.

CONVERSING upon the subject of the judgment with a friend the other day, who was not a believer in the doctrine as held by all true Christadelphians, he remarked, rather reproachfully, "What do they know about the judgment?" thereby resolving our belief into a mere matter of opinion to be classed among things called "nonessential." Well, we certainly would not venture to express "an opinion" upon such an important matter. We rest on knowledge and not upon opinion; and all that we can possibly know about it, is just what Christ and the prophets and apostles have revealed concerning it. With that "simplicity which is in Christ," we accept his teaching, and that of the apostle Paul; together with Daniel the prophet and others who have testified about it. With that "faith," which ought to characterise all who profess to be of the seed of Abraham, we simply believe what the Lord has said, without superadding human reasoning to explain it away, or wrest it from its legitimate meaning.

In order to tell what we know about it we cannot do better than quote the plainest language that can be found, even the words of the apostle Paul. He says in his 2nd epistle to the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgmentseat of Christ, that every one may receive the things in body, according to what he hath done, whether good or bad." In using the phrase "we must all," he evidently included himself and those to whom he was writing—"the Church of God, which was at Corinth." And if his writings are of any value to us in these latter days, we must claim to be a part of the same household, and share with all the rest in the arrangements of that epoch. Paul used language which was plain and forcible, and which would present the clearest idea to the minds of his readers. They were familiar with the idea of a judgment seat. He had stood before Cæsar. "Festus sitting on the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought." This idea of a seat, place or position, is presented in the vision which Daniel saw: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, . . . ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

The prophet Malachi speaks of a "book of remembrance" which was written "for those that feared the Lord and thought upon His name." The Spirit Revelator, to John, promises to him that overcomes—"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." Whatever that book may be, one thing is clear, it conveys the essential idea of some record upon the Spirit-pages, of divine cognition concerning the thoughts and conversation of those who "fear the Lord." The *judgment* concerning this record is held in reserve, a profound secret, until the day when Jehovah shall "make up His jewels." Then in the "reckoning," or "inspection," of them, "He will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." So says the Lord by Malachi. This sparing of those that serve Him argues that while being subject to an examination and a judgment, they are not subject to condemnation. In this we behold the exhibition of that grace which the apostle Paul tells us of in his epistle to the Ephesians: "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." It surely cannot be argued that the making-

up, or arrangement, of the “jewels” has ever yet taken place. And how abounding will be the outflow of that grace which illuminates them, “And if the righteous *scarcely be saved*, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Peter asks this. Even the righteous would fail in that day if depending solely upon their own merits or “works of righteousness which they have done.” So that in the summing-up of the account on record, corroborated by their own confession, the reward will be “of grace and not of debt.”

There is, therefore, an appointed day for the ‘*revelation of the righteous judgment of God*’; when the counsels of the heart shall be made manifest, then shall every man have praise of God.”—(1 Cor. 4:5.) David speaks plainly in Psalm 7:11. He there says, “God judgeth the righteous,” &c. In Psalm 26. he openly avows his willingness to be judged: “Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity: . . . Examine me and prove me; try my reins and my heart; for Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes, and I have walked in Thy truth.”

At the same period of time, when there shall be a “revelation of the righteous judgment,” which admits the saints to partake of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, there will also be a “revelation of that righteous judgment” which expels the unjust, the ungodly and the sinner to partake of that condemnation which their course has merited. They will not be permitted to “eat of the Tree of Life,” and live for ever; but, driven from that paradise where Abraham and Lazarus shall be comforted, they meet their final doom in the region of the “lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are?” whence, in the parable, the voice is represented as calling to the blessed in Abraham’s bosom for a little water to cool his tormented tongue. Then will be accomplished the saying of Jesus concerning those who rejected him when here on earth: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out.” How greatly will their anguish and remorse be enhanced by the sight of that blessedness of the Redeemer which they will be debarred from sharing. What wonder that they should then desire the coming of Lazarus or one of those little ones who closely followed the Saviour in the dark hours of adversity! Will not then be accomplished the foretelling of Jesus when he explained to his disciples the parable of the “net which was cast into the sea,” which, “when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.” So, he said, it should be at the end of the world; “the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and east them into a furnace of fire,” &c. This cannot be finally referred to any other time than the “hour which is coming,” in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good *unto* the resurrection of life; they that have done evil *unto* the resurrection of condemnation;” namely, the time referred to by Daniel the prophet, when “Michael, the great prince, shall stand up” for the deliverance of the people: “Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” This is the time referred to in Christ’s parable of “the nobleman,” when he shall return from the far country to “reckon with his servants,” the “unprofitable” to be consigned to “outer darkness,” where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” He is cast out of the society of those who have been profitable workers, increasing the talents committed to their trust. “The good they gathered in vessels, but cast the bad away.”

This “severing of the wicked from among the just,” and gathering out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity, must, according to the testimony, be accomplished during that period of time called the “hour of judgment.” The duration of this “hour” we need not touch upon here. The principal point we wish to notice here is, that the wicked and unjust are first cast out; afterwards the righteous shine forth in glory. “Gather ye together *first the tares*, and bind them in bundles to burn them; and gather the wheat into my barn.” This is the order of things, by command of God himself, and who shall reverse it? “The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just.” If the wicked were not to be found among the just, what force would there be in this language? “They shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire,” &c. THEN (or after this work is done) “shall the righteous shine forth as the SUN in the kingdom of the Father.” “*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” Then shall be finally accomplished that spoken by the prophet Malachi: “For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” At the same time the contrast is presented in the destiny awarded to those that fear the name of Jehovah: “But to you that fear My name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” These are they through whom the Sun will reflect his brightness—the jewels of his crown in that day, when “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some *to* everlasting life, some *to* shame and everlasting contempt.”

To this agrees the teaching of the apostle Paul in his confession before Felix: that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust;” and “as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled,” probably with a feeling of apprehension concerning the destiny which might await himself in that day referred to in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, the “day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile.” The contentious and disobedient may be found even in our day among those who are patiently continuing in well-doing, and seeking for the honour of the age to come. The same class were also found among the saints in the days of Paul, whose destiny he foretold: that they should be the subjects of “indignation and wrath” in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

We cannot by any process of right reasoning extend those events which belong to the “hour of judgment” into the day of Christ’s reign of peace and glory. Though he is still the judge in that day, and will judge and rule the world in righteousness during the thousand years, yet it will be in quite a different style and manner to that which inaugurates the establishment of his throne and kingdom. The judgment of the “hour” is a work of preparation and separation, ordering and arrangement, indignation and wrath. The judgment of the established throne will be a systematic enactment or carrying out of those laws and regulations pertaining to the new order of things—a reign of peace and glory, and blessedness to all people. “They shall fear him as long as the sun and moon endure throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish. and abundance of

peace so long as the moon endureth.” This happy state of things can only be brought about by that preparatory work connected with the “revelation of that righteous judgment” which begins at the household of the Deity; and which manifests the men through whom this reign of peace will be administered.

In leaving the subject here, we do so in the hope that others who are better qualified to handle it, will develop it still further, and unfold the beautiful harmony of *all* the Scripture teachings upon this important theme.