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CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND GLORIFIED.

SERMONS

PREACHED AT MERCHANT'S-LECTURE,
IN PINNER'S-HALL.

BY THE REVEREND AND LEARNED

MR. JOHN HURRION,

LATE DISSENTING MINISTER IN LONDON.

TO WHICH IS NOW PREFIXED,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE.

A New Edition.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord
Jesus Christ. GAL. vi. 14.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

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P R E F A C E.

HAVING formerly preached and published some Sermons on the knowledge of Christ, in his person, offices, and sufferings, I was inclined to pursue the same subject, the knowledge of Christ, in some discourses, concerning his resurrection, ascension, sitting at God's right hand, intercession, and judging the world, in the great day; that Christ might be seen and admired, not only in the sorrows of life, and agonies of death, but also in the glories of his exalted state, which must be pleasant and delightful to all who love him in sincerity. The favourable reception which the former compositions met with from such, and the use which, through a divine blessing, I have reason to hope, they have been of to some, have encouraged me to permit these sermons to follow the former from the press, as they did from the pulpit; and the rather, because they are designed, and I hope, in some measure, suited to set forth, and advance the knowledge of Christ, and his glorious work of redemption, through the several periods of time, to the consummation of all things. Being persuaded of the weight and importance of these doctrines of revelation, of the clear evidence which they offer of the deity and glory of our blessed Redeemer, and of the influence which they have upon the Christian's acceptance with God, his obedience, usefulness, and comfort in this world, and his eternal happiness in that to come, I was willing to recommend them in the best and most public manner I could.

The *resurrection from the dead* is one of the principles of the doctrine of Christ (*a*), and a foundation-truth which has great stress laid upon it in scripture (*b*), where we are told, that if *we confess with our*

(*a*) Heb. vi. 1, 2.

(*b*) Rom. ix. 10.—1 Cor. xv. 14, 17.—Rom. iv. 25,—1 Pet. i. 21
Rom. i. 4.

mouths the Lord Jesus, and believe in our hearts, that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved; that if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain, we are yet in our sins; for, as he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification; God raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God, and thereby declared him to be the Son of God: how they will support, or where they will place their faith and hope, who either do not know, or do not receive this truth, it highly concerns them to consider.

What I have said of the possibility (a) of a resurrection, and of the aids which reason affords it, does only shew, that the doctrine of the resurrection being revealed, reason can yield some assent to it, and can give some assistance to defend this point; but it does not hence follow, that the light of nature, or natural religion alone, can either find out, or receive this truth. When Paul preached it to the Athenians some mocked (b); some not only of the Epicureans, but even of the Stoics; these last, though zealous for natural religion, yet did not believe the doctrines of a resurrection, and future judgment. Plutarch (c) thought it a ridiculous thing, to imagine that the bodies of good men ascend, and to place earth in heaven. Eusebius has acquainted us (d), that the primitive persecutors, in opposition to the doctrine of the resurrection, used, after they had burned the bodies of the martyrs, to scatter their ashes, saying, ‘ Now, let us see whether they will

(a) Pages 4, 5.

(b) Acts xvii. 32.

(c) In Romulo. p. 35, 36. Ed. Franc.

(d) Τὰ ἐν Σάματι τῶν μαρτύρων μετέπειτα κείνται καὶ ἀισχυλίντα κατὰ σπράθεις τὸν πόταμον———νῦν ἴδωμεν εἰ ἀναστήσονται, καὶ εἰ ὁ Θεὸς δύναται ἐξελεῖσθαι ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν ἡμῶν, Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 1. p. 134 Edit. Vales. Paris. 1678.

N. B.—This was not done, when only an immoral prince, such as was Lucius Verus, filled the throne, but when this man had for his partner, or rather his superior, the demure, and precise Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, that great admirer of natural religion.

‘ rise again, and whether their God can deliver them out of our hands.’ This shews, that unassisted reason could neither find out, nor receive this truth, and consequently, the need there is of viewing it in that light, in which revelation hath placed it.

The *ascension* of Christ is a doctrine of great use and comfort to believers ; for it not only answers the types, fulfils the prophecies, and promises of it before hand, redounds to the honour and glory of God and Christ, but also it may fill the Christian with joy ; and to reflect upon these things, and to see his dear Saviour, who had been brought to the dust of death, now treading the sun and stars under his feet, and mounting up in his glorious body, to his heavenly throne, and that in a near relation, and with a cordial affection to his people here below, and with a joyful and glorious triumph over his and their enemies. Christ, as was foretold of him (*a*), has *ascended up on high, he led captivity captive* : our incarnate God is *gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet* ; therefore we may address Christians in the Psalmist’s words, *Sing praises, to our God, sing praises ; sing praises to our King, sing praises* (*b*). When Solomon was anointed king over Israel, so great were the acclamations of the people, that it is said *the earth rent with the sound of them* (*c*) ; but what joy could the crowning of Solomon with a crown of gold afford, compared with what may result from Christ’s ascending to his throne, and being crowned with glory ?

Christ’s *sitting at the Father’s right hand* is a farther illustration of his and his Father’s glory ; and how much it conduces to the faith and comfort of the redeemed, I have endeavoured to shew, in the ensuing discourses on that subject.

The *intercession* of Christ is recommended to our esteem in scripture, as that which renders him *able to*

(*a*) Psal. lxxviii. 18. (*b*) Psal. xlvii. 5, 6. (*c*) 1 Kings i. 40

save us to the utmost (a): the security, comfort and encouragement, which it may afford, even to the weakest true believer, I have, I hope, set in an useful light, in the sermons upon that head.

Christ's *judging the world*, in the great day, is by the apostle Paul spoken of (b), as one of the fundamental articles of the christian faith, and is made use of in scripture (c), as a grand incentive to repentance, and a diligent care, to be accepted of God ourselves, and to persuade others to *fly from the wrath to come*, and to *lay hold on the hope set before them*: it is produced as a bright evidence of Christ's government and glory, and a means of completing the work of redemption, and bringing the redeemed to their most consummate happiness. This point therefore, as well as the rest, cannot be insignificant and useless articles of our faith, but must be dear to all such as have a due value for Christ, and their own salvation.

What I have briefly hinted (d), of the insufficiency of the law of nature, to save a sinner, might have been more largely explained and confirmed, had there been time for it, and might be done here, were there room for it. The light of nature, in its present state, makes but very imperfect discoveries of God, of his perfections and will; of the way in which he may be acceptably worshipped in this world, and enjoyed by us, in that to come; of the immortality of the soul, and of the certainty, nature, and degrees of future rewards and punishments: these matters are very darkly and doubtfully represented, by the unassisted light of nature, as might easily be made appear; and it is no less certain, that the glory of God, which is, and ought to be, the chief end of all who truly love and enjoy him, has been not only overlooked, but opposed by the ancient patrons of natural religion,

(a) Heb. vii. 25.

(b) Heb. vi. 2.

(c) Acts xvii. 30, 31.—2 Cor. v. 9, 11.

(d) Pages 214, 15.

which agrees to what the scripture has told us (*a*), *That when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but waxed vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* An instance of this we have in Seneca, who, in one place (*b*), says, that, ‘the wise man beholds and contemns all the enjoyments of other men with as calm a mind as God; but upon this he values himself more than God, because God cannot use them, but he will not.’ He farther says (*c*), that ‘the upright man cannot be overcome by external things, and is an admirer only of himself;’ nay, he goes so far as to say (*d*), that, ‘there is something in which a wise man excels God, in that God’s wisdom is not by himself acquired, but is owing to the kindness of nature.’ This is that principle of pride and self-love, which the devil set up, when he made man a sinner; and which the spirit of God always pulls down, when he makes a man a Christian; as it is written (*e*), *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself; and he that glories, let him glory in the Lord.* It is worthy of observation, that instead of glorying only in Christ, natural religion, taken by itself, excludes him altogether; and when he is set up as sufficient for salvation, instead of giving him glory, must cast the vilest reflections on his wisdom, grace, and love, in becoming incarnate, living a life of sorrow, and dying an accursed death for men, and giving us an institution of doctrines and precepts, which we might have done very well without: but notwithstanding, as has been lately well observed (*f*), some have shewed a great

(*a*) Rom. i. 21.

(*b*) Sapiens tam æquo animo omnia apud alios videt, contemnitque, quam Jupiter; & hoc se magis suspicit, quod Jupiter uti illis non potest, sapiens non vult. Senecæ epist. 73. p. 21.

(*c*) Incorruptus vir sit externus est insuperabilis, miratorque tantum sui. Id. de vita c. 8.

(*d*) Est aliquid quo sapiens antecedit Deum, ille naturæ beneficio, non suo, sapiens est. Id. Epist. 53. p. 136.

(*e*) Mat. xvi. 2, 4.—1 Cor. i. 21.

(*f*) See the Bishop of London’s pastoral letter, p. 3.

zeal for natural religion, in opposition to revealed, with no other views, as it seems, than to get rid of the restraints of revealed religion, and to make way for the unbounded enjoyments of their corrupt appetites, and vicious inclinations. Those who write on the side of revelation, have as good a right to do it, and a much better cause to defend, than those who write against it; and if the friends of the latter encourage them to repeat, and reprint what has been often much better said before; shall not the friends of Christ and his gospel do what they can, in defence of his truth and glory, especially at a time, when men, by various arts, are endeavouring to undermine and run them down?

I was willing in this circumstance to comply with the desire of my friends, in publishing the ensuing discourses, concerning several great doctrines of the gospel, and to put Christians in remembrance of them, though they know them already, and are established in the present truth. If what I have written shall be found consonant to the scriptures, and serviceable to the faith, holiness, and establishment of any serious and humble Christian, or to make any persons such, I shall rejoice in the success. I will only add my request, that the serious and candid reader would excuse the imperfections and mistakes he may find in this work, and that his prayers, that God may be glorified by it, may be united with those of the unworthy author.

JOHN HURRIQN.

Jan. 28. 1728-9.

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PROPERTY OF
THE
PRINCETON
RESURRECTION
OF
THEOLOGICAL
CHRIST FROM THE DEAD;
IN
TWO SERMONS.

SERMON I.

Preached MAY 23, 1727.

Remember, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.—2 TIM. ii. 8.

THESE words are a part of the apostle Paul's second epistle to his beloved Timothy; and, as it is thought, of the last he wrote, he being now a second time prisoner at Rome, under the bloody Nero, ready to be offered, the time of his departure being at hand. In this epistle he has given to Timothy the evangelist his last instructions, as to what doctrines he should most insist on himself, and commit to other able and faithful men, by them to be transmitted to posterity. In the head of these stands the doctrine of CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, which he, in my text, has recommended to be remembered, taught, and received, as a principal article of our faith and happiness. *Remember, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel;* which words contain an assertion, its confirmation, and the use to be made of it.

1. The words contain an *assertion*, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was *raised from the dead*. The person here spoken of is described, partly by his work and office, *Jesus Christ*; he who was anointed to save men from their sins, and partly by his lineage and descent, he was of the *seed of David*, as it was foretold the true Messiah was to be; for, has not the scripture said (a), that Christ comes of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was born? That flesh which was thus derived from David was crucified and buried, and after that was raised from the dead, and came forth out of the grave, having its soul reunited to it, and entered into a state of happy life and immortality, as Christ himself said, *I am he that lives and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore* (b).

2. We have the *confirmation* of this truth, in those words, *according to my gospel*, viz. according to that revelation which I received from Christ, and which I have preached to the people, having also myself seen Christ in the flesh; for, *last of all he was seen of me also* (c). Christ's appearing was to qualify Paul to testify this important truth to others, according to the words of Ananias, *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that just One, and hear the voice of his mouth: for thou shalt be his witness to all men of what thou hast seen and heard* (d). Paul being thus qualified abundantly, published the doctrine of Christ's resurrection; he has asserted it more than thirty times in his writings, and it was his manner (e), in his preaching, to open the scriptures, and to prove Christ's resurrection from them.

3. We have the *use* which is to be made of this truth in the word *remember*, which is sometimes used to recollect and call to mind; so Peter *remembered the words of Christ* (f): and sometimes it is used to put others in mind of a

(a) Mic. v. 2.

(b) Rev. i. 18.

(c) 1 Cor. xv. 8.

(d) Acts xxii. 14, 15.

(e) Acts xvii. 2, 3.

(f) Mat. xxvi. 75.

thing ; so Joseph made mention of, or remembered, the departing of the children of Israel ; thus Paul exhorted Timothy to keep in mind, and put others in mind of Christ's resurrection. We are told, that the usual salutation among the primitive Christians was, The Lord is risen ! This is a truth never to be forgot or neglected, seeing the truth of the Christian religion, and the holiness and comfort of Christians have such a dependence upon it. From the words this doctrine may be drawn,

It is highly necessary to preserve the memory of Christ's assured resurrection from the dead.

In discoursing upon this point, I shall observe the following method.

I. I shall consider the *possibility* of a resurrection in general, and of Christ's in particular.

II. I shall shew the *necessity* of it.

III. I shall prove the *certainty* of it.

IV. I shall explain its *nature* and *properties*.

V. I shall assign the *reasons* of it.

And I shall then shew the use and improvement which is to be made of it.

I. I shall consider the *possibility* of a resurrection in general, and of Christ's in particular.

The apostle Paul introduced a discourse on this doctrine with that interrogation, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ? If indeed the dead rise not, then Christ is not risen (a).* If the resurrection is not possible, the doctrine of Christ's resurrection must be a mere fiction : The Sadducees (b) among the Jews denied the resurrection ; some of the Athenians (c) derided it, but without cause ; for reason suggests, that

(a) Acts xxvi. 8.—1 Cor. xv. 13.

(b) Acts xxiii. 8.

(c) Acts xvii. 32.

he who could at first make all things out of nothing is able to re-collect our scattered dust, and re-build the body:—If in nature the seed dies, and then is quickened, why should it be thought impossible for the God of nature to re-unite a soul and body which death had parted? Why should it seem impracticable for the same power that formed the body of Adam out of the dust of the earth in the creation, to frame it anew out of the earth in the resurrection? There is indeed no natural aptitude, or propensity, in a body once dead to live again, yet there is not any insuperable repugnancy in it thereto; it may, by a divine power, be quickened again without destruction or change of its species, or kind, or without supposing any thing contrary to the divine perfections. Abraham believed (*a*), that God was able not only to raise him up a son, but the same Isaac; and yet at that time there never had been any instance or example of a resurrection, that we read of: Since that time there have been many (*b*), as the son of the Shunamite, the widow's son, Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, and others. Hence appears the possibility of a resurrection; for though the argument will not hold from the possibility of the fact, viz. a thing is possible, therefore it really is; yet the argument from the fact to the possibility is good, that which has been may be. The Sadducees (*c*) thought to have confuted the doctrine by a captious question, whose wife the woman should be in the resurrection who had had seven husbands? but Christ removed the difficulty, by declaring, that in the resurrection there is no marrying, or giving in marriage: So that there is no need to question the resurrection, because husbands and wives cannot stand in the same relation in that world as they do in this. The possibility and certainty of the resurrection, Christ proved by scripture

(*a*) Heb. xi. 19.

(*b*) 2 Kings iv.—Mark v.—Luke vi.—John xi.

(*c*) Mat. xxii. 25.

testimony (a) ; God said, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* He is the God of their whole persons, the body is a constituent part of the man : Seeing God is the God of the man Abraham, therefore the body of Abraham, which is an essential part, shall live again ; for God is the God of the living man.

The apostle Paul, in discoursing on the resurrection, has asked this question, *If the dead rise not, what shall they do that are baptised for the dead (b) ?* Where it is evident he had respect to some usage then known, which supposed a resurrection, and also to the great disappointment of some Christians, in case there was none ; whether it was a being baptised into the *faith* of the resurrection upon the tombs of the martyrs, or Christians exposing themselves to the baptism of *sufferings*, in hope of a better resurrection (as Christ said, his disciples should be baptized with *his* baptism) or whatever custom he refers to, yet this I think is plain, that he has respect to some usage of those times, which was a proof not only of the possibility, but also of the certainty of a resurrection. God's infinite power renders a resurrection possible, and his revealed will confirms the certainty of it.— Christ is the person who shall change our vile bodies, according to the power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself (c) ; and all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

If there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen, and if so, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins, as the apostle Paul has assured us (d) : But if the resurrection is a thing possible, then there is a possibility of Christ's resurrection ; and we are not to reject the doctrine, though we cannot solve all the objections that may be raised against it, for *we know but in part.* Could we comprehend all things

(a) Exod. iii. 6.

(b) 1 Cor. xv. 29.

(c) Phil. iii. 21.

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 13.

else, and were there inexplicable difficulties only in this doctrine, there would be more colour for calling its possibility in question. But when we may be puzzled about the meaning of God's works, and when we know many things to be certainly true, the reason of which we cannot assign, (for God's ways are past our finding out) it is very absurd to deny the possibility of a resurrection, because we cannot account for all things belonging to it. No man has shewed or can shew any thing in it contrary to the divine nature, or that implies a contradiction : And of all men they have the least reason to question the possibility of it, who, according to their principles, must suppose, that men at first sprung out of the dust as plants, by a natural production. They who own an omnipotent power, and free agency of God in things created, have no room to doubt of his ability to effect this great work. To confess ourselves at a loss as to the *modus* of it, or the way and manner in which it shall be accomplished, is but to allow God to be as much above us in understanding, as we own him to be in power. The scripture has told us (*a*), that with God all things are possible, which are not contrary to the divine perfections, or inconsistent with themselves.

Seeing then, as hath been proved, a resurrection in general is a thing possible ; hence it follows, that there is no impossibility that Christ should rise from the dead. The Athenians therefore had no reason to mock at the hearing of it, as we read they did (*b*) ; nor ought we to treat it as a thing incredible. We have far greater reasons to give for the possibility of it, than can be alledged against it. Having thus made the possibility of it appear, my way is opened to what will come next to be considered, even the necessity and certainty of it ; to which I now proceed in their order.

II. I shall shew the *necessity* of Christ's resurrection.— It is fundamental to all our faith and happiness : This the

(*a*) Matt. xix. 26.

(*b*) Acts xvii. 32.

scripture has declared, *If Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins,—they that are fallen asleep are perished (a)* ; a number of dismal consequences follow, on supposition of Christ's not rising from the dead. If Christ is not risen, then to preach to the people, that he rose from the dead, must be vain preaching, because false ; and so that faith which is the effect of it must also be vain. If Christ is not risen, the whole gospel can be but a fable, and the happiness derived from it must consequently be only delusive ; for if Christ is not risen, then justice has not discharged him ; if justice has not discharged him, then it is not satisfied ; if justice is not satisfied, then God is not reconciled ; if God is not reconciled, then Christ's blood is not meritorious ; if Christ's blood is not meritorious, then his intercession cannot be prevalent ; and if his intercession is not prevalent, then for us there is no salvation : therefore if Christ did not rise, Christians cannot be saved. If Christ is not risen, then death is not destroyed ; if death is not destroyed, then Satan is not vanquished ; if Satan is not vanquished, then sinners cannot be delivered ; therefore if Christ is not risen, his people are not redeemed, but those that are dead in Christ are perished. If the object of faith fails, then salvation, which should be the consequent of it, must fail also : So necessary was Christ's resurrection to our salvation.

Christ having foretold his resurrection (*b*), when he said, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up* ; if he had not risen, he had been a false prophet, and so not fit to have been credited in other things ; but he has proved himself to be the faithful witness, in his being the first begotten from the dead.

(*c*) God had sworn with an oath that he would raise up Christ, and had declared it by the prophetic spirit (*d*), that

(a) 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15, 17, 18.

(b) John ii. 18, 19.

(c) Rev. i. 5.

(d) Acts ii. 30.

OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

he would not suffer his holy One to see corruption ; had not Christ risen, God had rendered his truth suspected ; and if he had failed in one point, the whole divine revelation had been uncertain ; for if he had deceived us in this part, he might in all the rest. And so Christ's not rising from the dead would have at once sapped the foundations of all our hopes of happiness.

If Christ had not risen, he could not have executed any of his offices after his death, the truth essential to his prophetic office had been lost, the merit and intercession necessary to his priesthood had been wanting, the power requisite in him as a King had not been conferred upon him, for to this end he rose again (*a*), that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. With good reason then did the apostle Paul lay the main stress of our salvation upon Christ's resurrection. *It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again* (*b*). Faith is now the hardest thing in the world, although the gospel sets before us a faithful, living, all-sufficient Saviour : But if it had presented one false, dead, and insufficient, faith had been impossible ; or if not impossible, yet as foolish, as now it is hard ; for what reason could there have been to expect that he should save us, who could not save himself ? *Therefore God raised Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God* (*c*). His resurrection was absolutely necessary, and it was not possible that he should be held of the cords of death (*d*) ; for if he had, God's decrees had been disappointed, his beloved Son and people had been lost, the throne of grace had been demolished, and the mansions of glory must have been left unpeopled. Hence we learn the necessity of Christ's resurrection, and the reason why Paul taught it so carefully ; and, when dying, left it to Timothy, to transmit it to posterity : hence also we learn how neces-

(*a*) Rom. xiv. 9.

(*b*) Rom. viii. 33, 34.

(*c*) 1 Pet. i. 21.

(*d*) Acts ii. 24

sary it is that we be well assured of the truth of it ; and this leads me to the next head : therefore,

III. I shall prove the *certainty* of Christ's resurrection. There is a natural prejudice against the doctrine of the resurrection in general ; When Christ had declared himself to be the *resurrection and the life*, he said to Martha, *believest thou this (a) ?* We need the best proof of this point, and especially of Christ's resurrection, seeing the whole of our salvation has such a dependence upon it ; God has been pleased therefore to give us very clear and abundant evidence of this truth, as may appear, if we consider the circumstances and effects of the thing itself, and the testimonies that have been given of it.

1. The certainty of Christ's resurrection may appear from the *circumstances* of it. These circumstances I now suppose to be truly reported ; hereafter I shall shew that the credibility of the witnesses is above exception.

The first circumstance which I shall take notice of, is the rolling away the stone from the sepulchre ; all the evangelists have taken notice of it. Matthew has told us (*b*), that an angel descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door : Mark has observed (*c*), that the stone was very great ; Christ enemies had sealed and made it sure : The women that were going to embalm Christ's body were solicitous how to get the stone rolled away (*d*) ; but when they came to the sepulchre, they found it ready done to their hands : this to be sure was not done by Christ's enemies, for they had made the door sure ; nor could it be done by his friends, for there was a guard set upon the tomb, to prevent any attempt of the disciples to take away the body : And if the stone was, as the evangelist says, rolled away by a good angel, certainly it was in order to Christ's coming out of the sepulchre : God would not have sent a

(a) John xi. 25, 26.

(c) Mark xvi. 4.

(b) Mat. xxviii. 2.

(d) Mat. xxvii. 66.

messenger from heaven to open the prison door, if, according to prophecy (*a*), Christ was not to be taken *from prison and from judgment*, or his body was not to be released from the prison of the grave.

Matthew has told us, *that the angel sat upon the stone, that his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment as white as snow; and that for fear of him the keepers shook and became as dead men (b)*. The stone then was not rolled away without their knowledge; they saw the angel, and were so terrified with the sight, that they had no power to prevent the opening of the sepulchre, or to roll back the stone upon it again. It is very probable the centinels were so affrighted with the appearance, that they forsook the sepulchre, as soon as they had a little recovered themselves, for we have no account of their being there, when the women, and Peter, and John came to it. It is also hinted, *that some of the watch went out into the city and told the chief priests all that was done (c)*: they were not so stupefied, but they knew how, and were able to relate what had come to pass; and it appears that they gave a right account of the matter, declaring no doubt Christ's resurrection, and the circumstances of it; seeing the priests and elders (*d*) invented quite another story, and put a lie into their mouths, hiring the soldiers to tell it to the people, of which farther notice shall be taken afterwards.

Another circumstance which shews the truth of Christ's resurrection, is the order in which the grave clothes were found. Those which had been wrapped about the body were lying in one place, *and the napkin which was about his head was not lying with the linen clothes; but was wrapped together, and laid in a place by itself (e)*. If the body had been stolen away, the grave clothes would not have been thus

(*a*) Isa. liii. 8.

(*b*) Mat. xxviii. 2, 3.

(*c*) Mat. xxviii. 11.

(*d*) Mat. xxviii. 13.

(*e*) John xx. 6, 7.

stripped off, and left behind in such order; the fear and haste of those who had come to take the body, would not have admitted of such deliberation and order: It is not probable, that if Christ's enemies had removed the body, they would have given themselves so much trouble; nor is it at all likely, they who set a guard upon the tomb, to prevent others from taking away the body, should take it away themselves: It was undoubtedly their interest to have kept it in the sepulchre, and to have shewed it there after the third day, which would have confirmed the opinion that Christ was a false prophet and a deceiver. Allowing that Christ really rose from the dead, we may well account for the grave clothes being taken off, and found lying in such order.

Christ's body was laid in a new sepulchre, *in which never any yet was laid (a)*. Providence wisely ordered it thus, to prevent any suspicion that it was not the body of Christ, but of some other person, that was raised. The tomb where Christ's body had been deposited was found empty; and it must be the body of Christ which was departed out of it, and no other, seeing there was no other body but his laid in it.

To make it appear that it was a real resurrection, and not a revival out of a swoon, it is related *(b)*, that before the burial of the body, a spear had been thrust into Christ's side, which piercing the membrane that encompasses the heart, and letting out the water contained in it, must necessarily have killed him, if he had not been dead before. There being then such evidence that he was really dead, before he was buried, it appears that his coming out of the sepulchre was a real resurrection. *There was also a great earthquake (c)* at the time of Christ's resurrection, to shew that death was subdued, and the grave conquered, by the

(a) John xix. 41.

(b) John xix. 34.

(c) Mat. xxviii. 2.

Prince of Life, now returning from the bars of the pit, and many other dead bodies of saints arose, and appeared to many. This might be to shew the possibility of a resurrection, and to confirm the truth of Christ's rising, and to do honour to him.

2. The certainty of Christ's resurrection appears from the *effects* of it. Such was the effusion of the divine Spirit, *This Jesus hath God raised up; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which you now see and hear (a)*. Peter declared that it was the Prince of Life, raised from the dead (*b*), who healed the lame man. It was Christ as risen that shewed light to the Gentiles, and gave Paul a commission to preach the gospel to them. This effusion of the Spirit, the working of miracles, the conversion of sinners, and the divers gifts of the Holy Spirit, which men received, flowed not from a dead, but a risen Jesus, who though *he was once dead, yet is now alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and hell (c)*. How is it possible for the dead to be raised—for the sick to be healed—for the unlearned to speak with tongues—and for the most obstinate sinners to be converted by Christ's power, if he himself perished under the stroke of death, and never rose from the grave, to fulfil his promise, and accomplish his work? Seeing, then, Christ's work has in fact been carried on,—seeing such fruits of his resurrection have actually been produced,—and seeing the gates of hell, neither have to this day, nor ever shall prevail against the church, it appears, that Christ is risen from the dead, and will die no more. God poured out his Spirit upon the witnesses of Christ's resurrection (*d*), enabled them to do many miraculous works:

(a) Acts ii. 32, 33.

(b) Acts iii. 15, 16.

(c) Rev. i. 18.

(d) Acts iv. 33,—Heb. ii. 4.

Multitudes were converted by their ministry, which made it appear, that God was with them, and owned them in their report, which the God of truth and holiness could not have done, had they obtruded a cheat, and a lie upon the world, in declaring Christ to be risen from the dead, as the case would have been, if this had not been a real truth.

3. The certainty of Christ's resurrection appears from *testimony* of all sorts, human, angelical, and divine.

(1.) Christ's *disciples* abundantly testified this truth ; and they had the three great qualifications of credible witnesses, certain knowledge, clearness, and integrity in their report.

[1.] We must allow that they had *certain knowledge*, if we believe the scripture, which tells us, that Christ shewed himself alive to the apostles, after his passion, by many infallible proofs (*a*) ; being seen of them forty days, and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God : He ate, he drank (*b*), he talked, and walked with them ; shewed them his very wounds, and permitted them to touch them. Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalen, when she had no expectation of it, and so could not be under the power of fancy ; and she did not know him, until by a powerful word he discovered himself to her. After that, Christ appeared to the women, who were going to carry the news of his resurrection to the apostles, as they were directed by the angel (*c*), *As they went to the disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail ! and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him (c)* : which shews that it was a real body, and not a spectre, or ghost which they saw ; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as they felt him to have. So he also appeared to the eleven apostles on a hill in Galilee (*d*), where he had appointed them to meet him. The two disciples who were going to Emmaus (*e*),

(a) Acts i. 3.

(b) Matt. xxviii. 14, 16.

(c) Ver. 8, 9.

(d) Ver. 16, 17.

(e) Luke xxiv. 13—32.

had a long conversation with him, and felt his divine influences on their hearts, and he made himself known to them in breaking of bread: The same evening he appeared to the eleven apostles (*a*), and the disciples who were with them, and shewed them his hands and his feet; he also ate before them, and opened their understandings to take in the meaning of such scriptures as related to his sufferings and resurrection: all which shewed, that it was not only a true body which appeared to them, but that the very same body of Christ which had been crucified, was now raised from the dead, even the very individual body in which the Logos dwelt. Well then might one of the apostles say, *What we have seen and handled of the word of life, declare we unto you* (*b*). Christ convinced unbelieving (*c*) Thomas of the truth of his resurrection, by permitting him to thrust his hand into the scar in his side. *After this Christ shewed himself again to several disciples at the sea of Tiberias* (*d*), and held a long conference with them. We are also assured that Christ (*e*), after his resurrection, appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once, the great part of whom were living when Paul entered this upon record; had not this been true, it is not at all probable so many would have agreed together to conceal the deceit; certainly among such a number some would have been found so weak, or so honest, as to have detected the falsehood: Nor is there any room to suppose, that so great a number of men should be all at once imposed upon by a strong imagination, that they saw the risen body of Christ, if there had been no such thing. Paul also has assured us, that last of all Christ was seen of him (*f*); I suppose at the time of his conversion, when he saw the just One, and heard the words of his mouth (*g*). Thus I hope the first branch of the argument is made good,

(*a*) Mark xvi. 11.—Luke xxiv. 40, 42.

(*b*) 1 John i. 1, 2, 3.

(*c*) John xx. 26.

(*d*) John xxi.

(*e*) 1 Cor. xv. 6.

(*f*) 1 Cor. 8.

(*g*) Acts xxii. 14.

that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection had certain and full knowledge of the fact, that Christ really rose from the dead.

[2.] The next branch of the argument is, that they declared Christ's resurrection with all *plainness* and *clearness*. Peter, in that famous sermon (*a*), whereby three thousand were converted, more than once asserted it, and proved it to be agreeable to ancient prophecy. And on another occasion he thus declared, that *this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses* (*b*). And we are told (*c*), that with great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; an instance of this we have in the answer which Peter, and the rest of the apostles gave to the high-priest and council, *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree; him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour:—and we are his witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost* (*d*). Paul in a sermon to the people of Antioch declared, *that God raised Christ from the dead, and that he was seen many days by such who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who were his witnesses to the people* (*e*). A multitude of other testimonies might easily be produced, but by these it appears how plainly and fully the apostles declared Christ's resurrection, the truth of which they had such certain knowledge of.

[3.] Another thing needful to render the argument invincible, is to make it appear, not only that these witnesses had sufficient means of knowing the truth of Christ's resurrection, and plainly asserted it, but that they were persons of *great faithfulness* and *integrity*. This appears in their publishing and recording their own infirmities; for instance, Matthew has told us (*f*), he had been a Publican, though the other evangelists say nothing of it. And Paul has re-

(*a*) Acts ii. 24--32. (*b*) Acts iii. 15. (*c*) Acts iv. 43.

(*d*) Acts v. 30, 31, 32. (*e*) Acts xiii. 30, 31, 32. (*f*) Matt. x. 3.

corded his black character of having been a blasphemer (*a*), and a persecutor before his conversion : Had they been inclined to dissemble or conceal the truth, surely they would have spared themselves. The apostles did not act in confederacy, and wink at each other's faults ; for we find Paul sharply reproved Peter when he was to be blamed (*b*).— They did not write encomiums upon one other, or satires upon their enemies, but as became honest and impartial historians, they plainly declared matters of fact, whether they were for them, or against them, and that with all possible freedom. They never expressed themselves in doubtful and ambiguous terms, nor did they scruple to assert Christ's resurrection to the very faces of the most subtle, knowing, and powerful of his enemies, who could not confute them any otherwise than by the absurd arguments of cruel mockings, stripes, and imprisonment. They had no prospect of worldly advantage by this testimony : Peter declared he had neither silver nor gold (*c*) : and the same apostle, on another occasion, with disdain refused it, when Simon, the father of heresy offered it, saying, *Thy money perish with thee* (*d*). Paul could appeal to the elders (*e*), that he had coveted no man's silver, gold, or apparel ; and that his hands had ministered to his necessities, and to them who were with him : He was a person of extraordinary learning and zeal, a man fit for business, in favour with the rulers before his conversion, and he stood fair for preferment ; but he lost all by turning Christian, and becoming so zealous a witness of Christ's resurrection. He has told us (*f*), that he and the rest of the apostles were set forth as appointed to death ; that to the present hour of his writing they bore hunger and thirst, were buffeted, and had no certain dwelling place ; that they were forced to labour, working with their own hands ; and were besides made the

(*a*) 1 Tim. i. 13. (*b*) Gal. ii. 11, 14. (*c*) Acts iii. 6.

(*d*) Acts viii. 20. (*e*) Acts xx. 30, 34. (*f*) 1 Cor. iv. 9, 11, 12, 13.

filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things. Therefore it could not be worldly riches, ease, or honours, that could induce them to carry such a message through the world: And if their doctrine could not make them happy in this world, they had as little reason to expect it would make them happy in another, if they published a known falsehood, and lived and died with a lie in their mouths.

It must require very clear evidence to convince a man of Paul's parts and prejudices; but being once convinced of the truth of Christ's resurrection (*a*), he was ready to die as a witness for it. Matthew left a gainful employment to follow Christ; and whatever he might do in a sudden heat, yet when Christ was gone out of the world, and his interest was so hated and persecuted, and he came calmly to consider the case, it is not at all probable he would have continued to act contrary to all his temporal interests, to assert and maintain a delusion, which he could not but know would make him more miserable in another world than it did in this.

The apostles were not credulous and easily brought to believe the truth of Christ's resurrection, when it was reported to them, by some of their own friends; nay, *their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not; so incredulous were they that Christ himself upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart* on that account (*b*); persons so distrustful were not easily to be imposed upon: But Christ gave them such convincing evidence of the truth of his resurrection, that they could not withstand it; and when once they were convinced of the truth of it, they always and unanimously asserted it, and sealed their testimony to it, at last, with their blood; though they were naturally timorous and low-spirited men. One of them had denied Christ, the rest forsook him and fled, at the time of

(*a*) Acts xxi. 13.—Philip. ii. 17.

(*b*) Luke xxiv. 11.—Mark xvi. 14.

his crucifixion; but when they were endowed with the holy Spirit (*a*), they boldly testified this truth to their bitterest enemies, who could not confute them, though their inclination and interest led them to have done it, had they been able.

If all these things are laid together, it will, I think, appear, that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were faithful honest men, and that we have no reason to question the truth of their testimony, but have the highest reason to believe that Christ certainly rose from the dead.

(2.) This truth is confirmed by the testimony of Christ's *enemies*. Some of the watch who guarded the tomb told it to the chief priests (*b*). Pilate gave an account of Christ's resurrection, and the miracles that attended it, to the emperor Tiberius, and the Roman Senate, in whose records these things were entered. Tertullian (*c*) appealed to this record in his apology for the Christians; and Eusebius did the same (*d*), in his church history: now, had there been

(*a*) Acts iv. 10, 14.

(*b*) Mat. xxviii. 11.

(*c*) *Die tertia concussa repente terra, et mole revoluta quæ obstruxerat sepulchrum, et custodia pavore disjecta, nullis apparentibus discipulis, nihil in sepulchro repertum est, præterquam exuvie sepulti—ea omnia super Christo Pilatus, et ipse jam pro sua conscientia Christianus, Cæsari tunc Tiberio nunciavit. Tertullian, Apolog. cap. 21. p. 209, 210. Ed. Haverchamp.*

(*d*) Καὶ δὲ τῆς παραδόξης τῆς Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἀναστάσεως τε καὶ εἰς ἐξουὺς ἀναλήψεως τοῖς πλείστοις ἦδε περὶ βοήτῃς παλαιῶ κεκρατηκότος ἔδωκε, τοῖς τῶν Ἰδυνῶν ἄρχαι τὰ παρὰ σφίσι καινοτεκνύμενα τῷ τῇ βασιλείᾳ ἀρχὴν ἐπικρατῶντι σηµαίνειν, ὥς ἂν μὴδὲν ἄτὸν διαδιδράσκει τῶν γινόμενων, τὰ περὶ τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως τῆς Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας ἦδη καὶ ὅλης Παλαιστίνης Βεβηκμένα, Πιλάτος Τιβερίῳ Βασιλεῖ κινῶνται, ὥς τὰς τε ἄλλας αὐτοῦ πυθόμενος τερατίους καὶ ὥς ὅ τι μετὰ θάνατον ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνέστη ἦδε Θεὸς εἶναι παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐπιπίστευτο. Eusebius Hist. Eccl. Lib. 11. c. 2. pi 31, 32. Ed. Par.

See Justin Martyr appealing to the acts of Pilate concerning some other matters relating to Christ. Apol. 1. p. 56, 71. Ed. Thirlby.

no such record remaining, how easily might such an appeal have been confuted? but, if there was any such record, it shews that Pilate, Tiberius, and the Roman senate believed Christ's resurrection to be a real thing. It is said, that the emperor Tiberius so far believed the report, as to put forth an edict for the burning such alive as persecuted the Christians, if they could prove no other crime upon them but their Christianity. Josephus also, the historian, who was no Christian, testified that Christ rose the third day (*a*), and appeared to his disciples. Julian the apostate (*b*), when having received his death, took a handful of his blood, and with rage threw it up into the air, crying out, 'Thou hast at length overcome me, O Galilean;' owned that Christ, as man, was alive again, for as man only he was a Galilean. Julian had been educated a Christian, and was a man of a prying wit, and uncommon malice, and had there been any fraud in the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, he was as able

Vid. Euseb. Chronic. lib. 1. p. 78. lib. 11. p. 303. Gr. p. 43, 73. Vers. Hieron. Ed. Scaliger.

There are remaining some spurious acts of Pilate called the Gospel of Nicodemus, with two epistles from Pilate to Tiberius; which they who have a mind to see them, will find in M. Fabricius's collection of Apocryphal Pieces, Vol. I. p. 212. 301.—as likewise a pretended Greek rescript of Pilate to the emperor is to be met with in the same work. Vol. II. p. 456, &c.

(*a*) Γίνεται κατὰ τῆτον την χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, ἔγει ἀνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή—αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν παυρῶ ἐπιτιμηκός. Πιλάτῃ, οὐκ ἐπάυσαντο ὅιγε πρώτον αὐτὸν ἀγαπήσαντες, ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν, τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία θαυμάσια περὶ αὐτοῦ ἐρηκόταν. Josephus Antiq. Jud. lib. xviii. c. iii. n. 3. p. 798. Ed. Oxon.

(*b*) Ἐκείνον δὲ γε φασὶ διζάμενον την πληγὴν ἐκθῦς πληῖσαι τὴν χεῖρα τοῦ αἵματος, καὶ τοῦτο ρίψαι εἰς την αἴρα καὶ φᾶναι νενίκηκας Γαλιλαῖς· καὶ κατὰ ταῦτο τὴν τε νικὴν ὁμολογῆσαι καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν τολμῆσαι οὕτως ἐμβρόντητος ἦν. Theodorit. Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. cap. 20. p. 147. Ed. Par.

Vid. et Sozomen. Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. cap. 2. p. 419.

and as willing as any of Christ's enemies, to have detected and exposed it ; but he could find none. I would only farther observe upon this head, that the testimony of an enemy for or in favour of a person, is reckoned of great weight because it must be the mere force and conviction of truth that draws it from them.

(3.) We have the testimony of the *angels* who said, *He is not here, he is risen (a)*. Christ was now seen of angels in his resurrection, as he had been attended by them in the hour of his passion. Christ's resurrection is a doctrine which destroys Satan's kingdom ; it was not therefore an evil angel, but a good angel who testified it to the women. He is called *the angel of the Lord* ; and is expressly said to come from heaven. And there is no reason to question the knowledge, or veracity of such a heavenly witness : But yet we have a higher testimony than any of these ; for,

(4.) We have the testimony of *God himself*. God the Father, who foretold and promised it ; for David speaking by inspiration, said, *The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand :—he shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head (b)*. And when the Father brought again into the world the first-begotten (*c*), at his resurrection, he said, *Let all the angels of God worship him*. God the Son testified this truth (*d*), in these words *I am he that lives, and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore*. God the Spirit had borne witness to Christ's resurrection ; for we are told (*e*), that the God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom the Jews slew and hanged on a tree, of which things the apostles were witnesses ; and so also was the Holy Ghost. Thus there are *three that bear record from heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit* ; and *if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater (f)*. If two or three credible witnesses

(a) Mat. xxviii. 2.

(b) Psal. cx. 1, 7.

(c) Heb. i. 6.

(d) Rev. i. 18.

(e) Acts v. 30, 32.

(f) 1 John v. 7, 9.

among men are thought sufficient to confirm a thing, shall not the testimony of the heavenly Three have the utmost weight with us?—Thus I have endeavoured to prove the certainty of Christ's resurrection by the circumstances and fruits of it, and by testimonies of friends and enemies, of God, angels, and men. All that remains, on this head, is to answer two or three objections which may be made against the reality of Christ's resurrection; but these I must refer to the next discourse, and shall conclude this, with some

APPLICATION.

1. Is Christ risen? then how *dangerous* and *miserable* is the conduct of his enemies. Christ lives to observe their sins and to judge and punish them for them: Assurance is given to all men, that he shall judge the world in righteousness, by his resurrection from the dead (*a*). How hard then is it for sinners to kick against the pricks, to degrade and reject a risen Saviour, who is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death (*b*), who is as able to destroy them that despise him, as he is to save them that believe in him? Every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue must confess him (*c*): Such as do not bow to the sceptre of his grace, must fall under the iron rod of his indignation; and whatever they now think, they will hereafter call to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

2. Is Christ risen from the dead (*d*)? then how needful is it to *kiss the Son*, and by faith to submit and resign to him? The gospel is no fable; faith is not vain; believers are not yet in their sins; Christ rose for their justification, and so their salvation is in an able and immortal hand: He lives for ever, but he lives not for himself alone (*e*), but

(*a*) Acts xvii. 31.(*b*) Rev. i. 18.(*c*) Phil. ii. 11.(*d*) Rom. iv. 25.(*e*) Heb. vii. 25.

to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him.—What encouragement is here to believe! how great is the happiness of believers! Blessed then are all who put a fiducial trust in the risen Jesus.

3. Is Christ risen? then how may this raise the Christian's *faith, hope, and joy*? God raised him from the dead, that their *faith and hope might be in God* (*a*): Such have reason to bless God for *begetting them to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead* (*b*). He who rose for our justification will not leave the weakest true believer under condemnation. He that conquered death and the grave, and raised up his own body, is able to raise up our dead hearts to himself, and to cut down our living enemies, whether inward or outward. No blessings are too good for his love to grant, or too great for his power to confer upon his people, who are the travail of his soul. The waters of death could not quench the flame of his love for them; he spent one life in bleeding and suffering for them on earth, and he is now spending another in pleading for them in heaven (*c*): Therefore in all distresses and wants the believer may have recourse to Christ; for he lives and cares for him. With what satisfaction then may a Christian leave all the dearest concerns of the church, of his friends, and of his own soul, in the hands of a risen Redeemer?—God the Father has shewed himself to be at peace with the sheep, in bringing again from the dead their great Shepherd. What reason then have Christ's people to make God the object of their *faith, hope, and joy*, through Jesus Christ (*d*)? Death itself could not conquer, nor the grave confine their dear Saviour: what then is able to stand before him? Can any thing be too hard for him to do, who has broken the cords of death, and the bars of the grave? is he not

(*a*) 1 Pet. i. 21.

(*b*) 1 Pet. i. 3.

(*c*) 1 Pet. v. 7.

(*d*) Heb. xiii. 20.

able to save his people, and destroy their enemies to the uttermost. Let then all such as have received him by faith, with joy and thankfulness; remember, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead.

SERMON II.

Preached JUNE 6, 1727.

Remember, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.—2 TIM. ii. 8.

THE possibility, necessity, and certainty of Christ's resurrection were formerly discoursed of from this text. I proceed now to remove some *objections* which have been raised against this truth.

I. It may be objected, that the Jews (*a*) affirm Christ's disciples to have stole away his body by night, whilst the soldiers, who guarded the tomb, slept: Therefore from his body not being found there, on the third day, his resurrection is not proved: But this objection is a lie, invented by Christ's inveterate enemies, to secure their own reputation, and cast a reproach upon the Christian religion. The story will appear to carry little colour of truth in it, if the following things are considered.

(1.) It is not at all probable, that the disciples, who forsook Christ, and fled when he was apprehended, should have courage enough to break through a guard of soldiers, and carry away his dead body, especially when they doubted of his being the true Messiah. That they did it not before

(*a*) Matt. xxviii. 11.

the watch was set, appears from the *sealing the stone*, and *placing a guard about the tomb (a)*; for it cannot be thought, that Christ's enemies would seal and guard an empty sepulchre: doubtless they assured themselves, that the body was there, before they took such pains to keep it; and if it was there when they set a guard about the tomb, there is no reason to think that the disciples, who did not attempt to take it away the first night, when there was none to hinder them, should do it when a guard of soldiers was placed about it.

(2). The story carries its own confutation in it; for if the disciples took away the body, whilst the soldiers slept, how could they know it? if some of them were awake, at the time, how is it that they did not awake the rest, and prevent it? Or if they were told of it by others, who saw it, had it not been easy for them to have pursued and overtaken the disciples, loaded with the dead body, and to have recovered it from them? At least, why did they not produce the person or persons who saw the disciples take the body away? It is plain the soldiers never thought of this excuse, until it was put into their heads, nor is it to be supposed they should all be so careless and negligent of their duty, when they knew to what danger they should thereby expose themselves; as is hinted in those words, *If this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you (b)*.

(3.) If the disciples had stole Christ's body, whilst the soldiers slept, how is it that they did not carry it away, with the grave clothes upon it? Which being wrapped about it with a large quantity of spices of about an hundred pound weight (c), could not be taken off so hastily, as their fear and danger must require. Or supposing the disciples had so hastily and irreverently stripped the dead body of their

(a) Matt. xxvii. 66. (b) Matt. xxviii. 14. (c) John xiv. 39, 40.

Lord, yet how can we think that they would have left the grave clothes in such order when they knew it would be as much as their lives were worth, for the watch to awake and apprehend them ?

(4.) It is not at all likely, that the Jews who were so desirous to have kept Christ's body in the sepulchre, until the third day was past (*a*), would have rewarded the negligence of the soldiers, with large sums of money, and have undertaken to pacify their master, if he should resent it, had the body been taken away whilst they had been asleep.

(5.) It is unlikely that the disciples should be able to roll away a great stone, from the door of the sepulchre, and not make noise enough to awake the watch, if they were asleep ; nor is it probable, that the soldiers were far from the entrance into the tomb, or from one another, seeing that was the only place they had to guard ; besides we do not know what methods the Jews might take to make the sepulchre sure, seeing Pilate (*b*) gave them leave to make it as sure as they could.

(6.) It is strange that the Jews did not endeavour to support their story by some plausible corroborating circumstances, seeing the disciples gave them so much occasion to do it, in that they not only asserted the certainty of Christ's resurrection, in opposition to the idle tale they told the people, but also produced so many witnesses and circumstances of Christ's resurrection, and confirmed their doctrine by so many miracles, and made so many proselytes, as would have made it absolutely necessary for Christ's enemies to have confirmed their account with more than the bare assertion of the soldiers ; and especially if the disciples reported what Matthew has recorded of the rise and falsehood of that report of their having stolen the body of their Master ; all these things put together may cause us to conclude, that the objection has no truth or weight in it.

(*a*) Matt. xxviii. 12.

(*b*) Matt. xxvii. 65.

2. It may be objected, if Christ really rose from the dead he ought to have shewed himself openly to the people, whereas his followers confess he was not seen of all the people, but by *witnesses chosen before of God* (a) : now his more public appearance among the people, especially to those that crucified him, and so knew him, and were satisfied that he was really dead, might wonderfully have convinced them, and turned to the advantage of the Christian cause ; but the keeping it a secret among Christ's friends made it look like a trick and delusion imposed upon the world. To this it may be replied in general, if the people would not believe the evangelists and apostles, neither would they have been persuaded, though they had seen one risen from the dead. They might have said, what they saw was only a ghost in human shape, or that they were imposed upon by the strength of imagination, but really saw nothing at all ; or they might have thought the devil might have been permitted to raise up, and actuate the body of Christ, for a time, though it rose not to a blessed immortality. Whilst Christ was living the Jews said *he had a devil* (b), and it would have been no wonder if they had imputed the appearance of his body, after he had been dead, to the same agent ; especially seeing he had not been dead long enough to putrify, or be turned into dust : And if these or the like suspicions had prevailed on them, of what advantage would Christ's bodily appearance have been to them ? Christ had but a little before experienced, in the instance of Lazarus, how little a person's appearing to them from the dead would work upon them ; for they sought to kill both Christ and Lazarus (c), because many of the Jews, by reason of him, believed on Jesus. How little reason then had Christ to appear after his resurrection to such obdurate wretches ?

Christ before his death had declared, that in a *little time*

(a) Acts x. 40, 41.

(b) John vii. 20.

(c) John xii. 10.

the world should see him no more (a) ; if after that he had appeared to them, it is very likely they would have charged him with being a false prophet, or at least his disciples might have called his veracity in question ; besides the glory and grandeur of Christ's risen state would not admit of such free and familiar converse with all sorts of men. It was part of his humiliation and sufferings to be numbered with transgressors, and to endure the contradiction of sinners : but when he rose, his humiliation and sufferings were at an end, and he was now entering upon his glorious exalted state ; and therefore it did not seem fit that he should debase himself to hold conversation with the wicked, and satisfy their endless and unreasonable doubts and scruples.—The high-priests were informed by some of the watch, of Christ's resurrection, and the circumstances of it, but instead of being wrought upon by it, they maliciously stifled the evidence, and hired men to report a lie, in order to suppress the belief of it, when at the same time they could not but be convinced in their own consciences, that Christ was really risen. What reason then could there be for Christ to manifest himself to such malicious enemies ?

It is also to be considered, that Christ was to stay but a short time upon earth, and had many important things concerning his kingdom, to impart to his disciples, and as they were to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth, it was fit he should give them full instructions ; and therefore he spent his time chiefly with them.

One principal reason why Christ did not, after his resurrection, shew himself in common to the people was, because it was then, as it is now, the will of God, that men should live by faith : Christ therefore appeared to a select number, who were proper witnesses, holy men, owned of God, and inspired by his Spirit, to preach and write the truth ; and God was pleased to *bear witness by divers signs and mira-*

(a) John xiv. 11.

cles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost (a), that their doctrine was true : and this way Christ's resurrection was as clearly proved, as it could have been by his bodily appearance among them ; *Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed (b)*. God could easily give men such evidence and conviction of his being, as should render it impossible for any man to doubt of it ; but he has not seen fit to do it ; he expects we should pay a deference and honour to his veracity, and take his bare word, and depend upon it, even when we have no other evidence of the truth of a thing ; so he required the people to believe his word, assuring them of Christ's resurrection, by the ministry of the apostles without his bodily appearance among them. It may indeed be supposed, that such an appearance would have brought many to have owned him to be the true Messiah ; but what would that have availed them, seeing they might believe that, and yet not be saved ? The devils know and believe him to be the true Messiah, and yet tremble at the thoughts of their future doom and misery. God has fixed it as a standing rule (*c*), that in the mouths of two or three witnesses every word shall be established ; and upon such evidence we venture our lives and estates : But in the case before us we have not only two or three, but a great many witnesses, far more credible than the common people among the Jews would have been, if Christ had shewed himself to them. It is not the number of witnesses, but their knowledge, veracity, and open declaration, which are chiefly to be regarded in matters of this nature. If these things are seriously considered, I hope they will be found to contain in them a sufficient answer to the objection.

3. There yet remains another objection to be answered, which is this,—Christ, before he died, declared, that he should be three days and three nights in the heart of the

(a) Heb. ii. 5.

(b) John xx. 29.

(c) Deut. xix. 15.

earth, and that he should rise again *the third day* (a); whereas it is plain, that he died and was buried the latter part of the day before the Jewish sabbath, and that he rose early in the morning after it; so that he lay but one whole day in the sepulchre. Now, I would here observe, that this is not an objection against the truth of Christ's resurrection, but against the truth of his predictions; and so I might dismiss it as foreign to my present subject: but because Christ's resurrection is not worth contending about, if he were a false prophet, (for then he could neither be the true Messiah, nor the true God,) I shall endeavour to set this matter in the clearest light I can. An inspired writer has told us, that Christ rose the third day: *I deliver to you*, said Paul, *that which I also received*, [viz. from Christ himself,] *that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day* (b). Christ's body was in the grave part of the sixth day of the week, all the seventh, and part of the first day of the week; so that it is evident it was on the third day that he rose, including the day of his burial, and the day of his resurrection. If Christ had intended to have remained three whole days in the grave, his resurrection must have been not on the third, but on the fourth day. It is plain, then, that Christ, by the *three days*, did not intend complete natural days, consisting each of twenty-four hours, but part of three such natural days. It is, as one has observed (c), a received rule among the Jews, that a part of a day is put for the whole; so that whatsoever is done in any part of the day, is properly said to be done that day. According to this rule, it might properly be said, that Christ was three days and three nights in the earth, or part of three natural days, consisting of night and day. According to the first division of time (d), the evening and the morning were the first day;

(a) Mat. xii. 40.—xx. 19.

(b) 1 Cor. xv. 34.—Gal. i. 12.

(c) Dr. Whitby on Mat. xii. 40.

(d) Gen. i. 5.

accordingly, the evening or night before Christ suffered must be reckoned to the first day; the evening or night before the Jewish sabbath belongs to the second day; and the night before the first day of the week belongs to the third day; and, thus understood, it might be said,—‘As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so Christ was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’

4. It may be asked,—If Christ really rose from the dead, why did he say to Mary, *Touch me not (a)*? If it was a real body, why should he refuse such a means of conviction that it was so? To this I reply,—That Christ did not absolutely forbid the touching; for this and the other Mary held him *by the feet, and worshipped him (b)*. But when he said, *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended, but go tell my disciples*,—it is as much as if he had said, Neither you nor I can spare much time for this, I have other work for you now to do; go carry the good news of my resurrection to my poor disconsolate disciples, and inform them where they may meet and converse with me; this is of more importance than your touching me; there may be time enough hereafter to gratify you this way, *for I am not yet ascended*. But farther,—Mary Magdalene did not need such a sensible conviction. Christ had made such a powerful impression on her mind, before she attempted to touch him, as convinced her who he was (*c*). I will only add here,—That Christ was not unwilling that his disciples should see and touch his body after his resurrection. Thomas received conviction in this way; and he shewed the rest of them his hands and his feet, saying, *Handle me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have (d)*: therefore, there is no weight in this any more than in the other objections. These being removed, our way is clear to the next general head.

(a) John xx. 17.

(b) Mat. xxviii. 9.

(c) John xx. 16.

(d) Luke xxiv. 39, 40.

IV. I shall explain the *nature, quality, and properties* of Christ's resurrection, and shew the agreement and disagreement between that and ours. Christ's resurrection was the restoring life to his dead body, and the removal of it out of the grave: It was not the forming another new body out of the dust, for that had been a creation, not a resurrection; nor was it reuniting scattered particles of dust, for his flesh saw no corruption; his body was never dissolved, though for a time it was dead, by a separation of his human soul from it; though even then neither soul nor body were separated from his divine person; as when a man draws his sword out of his scabbard, holding the sword in one hand, and the scabbard in the other, the sword and the scabbard are really separated from each other, but neither from the man; so Christ's soul and body remained united to his divine person, whilst they were separated from each other: and hence it follows, that in the resurrection of Christ there was no reunion between his human nature and his divine person, for that union had never been dissolved; but there was a reunion between his human body and soul, which for a time had been parted from each other. Concerning Christ's resurrection, it is said, That *his soul was not left in hell*, and that *God's Holy One did not see corruption* (a): his soul did not long remain in a state of separation from his body, which was its state whilst the body lay dead; but before the body could putrify it re-entered, and animated the same body again, that had been dead and buried; and that it was so, appeared by the marks of his sufferings upon it. Christ's resurrection is ascribed to his person; for he said of himself, *I am he that was dead and am alive* (b), though strictly speaking, it belonged only to his body, for that only lay in the grave, and was raised out of it. Christ's coming out of the grave was rather a manifestation than a proper part of his resur-

(a) Acts ii. 31.

(b) Rev. i. 18.

rection: It was a triumph over the grave, as his living again was a triumph over death. That which died was saved from death, according to Christ's earnest prayers.

The efficient cause of Christ's resurrection was the infinite power of God, which being common to all the persons in the Blessed Trinity, the resurrection is sometimes ascribed to the Father (*a*); sometimes to the Son (*b*); *in three days*, said Christ, *I will raise it up*; and sometimes to the Holy Ghost (*c*): For Christ was *quickened by the Spirit*. Christ's being raised by the Father and Spirit, is not inconsistent with his raising himself; for, *what things soever the Father does, these also does the Son* (*d*); for they being one in nature, they are also one in operation. The unity of nature, and distinction of persons, is the ground of ascribing this work sometimes to the Father, sometimes to the Son, and sometimes to the Holy Spirit.

There is, in some things, a resemblance between the resurrection of Christ and of Christians: Christ rose without sin, so shall his people: He had the same body which died, so shall the Christian have: Christ rose to a glorious immortality, so shall the redeemed. But there are other things wherein Christ's resurrection and ours differ: Christ rose by his own power, we by his: Our mouldered bodies shall be rebuilt, Christ's body saw no corruption: Christ rose soon after he was buried, some of the saints lie a long time in the grave: Christ rose as the head and representative of his people, they rise as members of his mystical body: Christ rose with a fulness of the Godhead in him, but this belongs not to Christians: Christ rose to enter into his own glory, Christians to behold his glory: He rose to sit upon his Father's throne, Christians rise to bow and adore before it. Thus his and our resurrection differ.

(*a*) Eph. i. 20.

(*b*) John ii. 19.

(*c*) 1 Pet. iii. 18.

(*d*) John xv. 19.

I proceed now to the other branch of this head, to shew the *properties* and *qualities* of Christ's resurrection.

1. Christ rose in a *public capacity*: as he *died for our sins*, so he *rose again for our justification*; hence the apostle Paul said, *Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather who is risen again (a)*: and *believers are raised up together with him*: we may say they are raised up *in him (b)*. It is in scripture supposed and taken for granted, that Christians are risen with Christ; he being their head and representative, his public acts are spoken of as theirs. Christ was brought from the dead, as the *great shepherd of the sheep (c)*, not as a private person; for, *since by man came death, by man must come the resurrection of the dead (d)*. Adam, as a common root, died himself, and conveyed death to all its branches; Christ, as a common head rose from the dead, and conveys life to all his members; therefore Christians are called *children of the resurrection (e)*; and we are told, that *as in Adam all die (f)*, as their federal head, so *in Christ shall all be made alive*, even all that are under him as their federal head.

2. Christ rose with *great power*, even with such power as discovered him to be *the Son of God (g)*. There was not only *power*, but *mighty power (h)* that wrought in Christ, when he rose from the dead. He rose from under a curse so heavy as would have sunk all mankind into hell; and he ascended up to a glory above that of all creatures, and all by his own power. To raise the dead is a work of omnipotence; Christ had power to *lay down his life, and to take it again (i)*; he therefore is the Lord God omnipotent; the strongest cords of death could not hold him; he had power enough not only to raise up his own body,

a Rom. iv. 25.—viii. 34.

(b) Colos. iii. 1.

(c) Heb. xiii. 20.

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 21

(e) Luke xx. 26.

(f) 1 Cor. xv. 22.

(g) Rom. i. 4.

(h) Eph. i. 19, 20.

(i) John x. 18.

but also to bring others out of their graves, when he rose, as an evidence of that power, whereby he is *able to subdue all things to himself (a)*.

3. Christ rose with great *magnificence and glory* ; his state of humiliation being now ended, he put off all the sorrows and infirmities of human nature ; and with brightness, as the sun comes out of an eclipse, he rose out of darkness into the most glorious light. In his converse with his disciples, he was obliged to veil this glory, because they could not bear the lustre of it. Paul was struck blind, and John fell at his feet as dead, when he let out some rays of it upon them. The angels that were sent to roll away the stone, and proclaim his resurrection, appeared in shining garments, as was fit on the glorious occasion of the return of the Prince of life from the gloomy territories of death and the grave. Now he saved himself indeed, and in coming out of the grave, acquired more glory than he would have done in coming down from the cross ; for it is a greater thing to recover life when lost, than to preserve it when only in danger. The earthquake at his resurrection was a token of his triumph over the grave, and all the regions of darkness.

4. Christ rose to *universal empire and dominion* ; he suffered in the *form of a servant* ; he rose to be *the Lord both of the dead and living (b)* : *he has the keys of hell, and of death (c)* ; he was lately death's prisoner, on his resurrection he now appears as death's Lord. When he was raised from the dead, he became *head over all things (d) to the church*, that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him.

5. Christ's resurrection is the *pattern and cause* of his people's resurrection ; their bodies are to be fashioned according to his glorious body : Christians shall be raised, not

(a) Phil. iii. 21.

(b) Rom. xiv. 9.

(c) Rev. i. 18.

(d) Phil. ii. 10, 11.

by a mere word of power, but by that quickening Spirit which dwells in Christ (*a*), as the head, and in them as the members ; *Them that sleep in Jesus shall he bring with him* : he shall quicken the mortal bodies of the saints by his Spirit, which dwells in them ; and he that believes in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

6. Christ rose with a heart full of *grace* and *love* to his people ; neither the sorrows which he had endured, nor the glory to which he was now raised, could alienate his affections from his people. Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils, was first to see him (*b*), and carry a most tender and gracious message to his people ; for thus he said to her, *Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God (c)*. Men often hate those by whom they are sufferers, and despise those that are beneath them : but the risen Jesus still owns his disciples, and calls them brethren, a term of respect which he had never used before. The bitter waters of death could not quench Christ's love, nor the floods of God's wrath drown it. He stayed forty days out of heaven to instruct, comfort, and confirm the faith of his disciples : His expressions of love and condescension to his people were not less, but greater after his resurrection, than they were before. Peter who had shamefully denied him, was singled out by name to be acquainted with the joyful news of his resurrection ; for his gracious words were, *Go tell my disciples and Peter (d)*, that so Peter might know, that Christ still loved him, how ill soever he had used him. Unbelieving Thomas was convinced by an act of astonishing love and goodness ; Christ said to him, *Reach hither thy finger, beho' my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing (e)*. He now carried the lambs in his

(*a*) 1 Thess. iv. 14.—Rom. viii. 11.—John xi. 25.

(*b*) Mark xvi. 9.

(*c*) John xx. 17.

(*d*) Mark xvi. 7.

(*e*) John xx. 27.

bosom, as the good shepherd ; and as the Prince of peace, he often spoke peace to his disciples when he entered their assemblies (*a*), after his resurrection : in the same temper he parted with them, for he was snatched from the earth as he was blessing them (*b*).

7. Christ rose with all the essential *parts* of that body, that had been crucified. Christ's risen body had flesh and bones, he ate and drank. It was not an ubiquitarian body which rose, but one so confined to one certain place, as not to be in another at the same time : *he is not here, he is risen* (*c*), said the angel ; which had not been true, if Christ's body had been every where at once. When he ascended he was parted from his disciples (*d*), and the heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things (*e*). Now, if his body was capable of being in many places at once, as the Papists and Lutherans teach, what truth could there be in the forementioned scriptures ? But let God be true, though every man be found a liar.

8. Christ rose with the *marks* and *prints* of his death upon his body, which made it evident, that it was the same body which had been crucified ; for this reason it is probable they were continued, otherwise he that healed the young man's ear with a touch (*f*), before his humiliation was over, could easily have healed his own body, in as short a time, when his state of exaltation had commenced. Whether these marks of his death still remain upon Christ's body, I shall not determine, seeing the scripture has not done it, unless that text is to be thought to favour the affirmative (*g*), which speaks of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain : but this is a point which we need not know at present, it will be time enough when Christ shall be seen as he is.

(*a*) John xx. 19, 21, 26. (*b*) Luke xxiv. 51. (*c*) Mat. xxviii. 6.

(*d*) Luke xxiv. 51. (*e*) Acts iii. 21. (*f*) Luke xxii. 51.

(*g*) Rev. v. 6.

V. I proceed to assign some *reasons* of Christ's resurrection.

1. Christ rose from the dead to vindicate his *deity*, and to manifest his glory, which had been hid and veiled in his life and death. The Jews had insulted him upon the cross, saying, *If thou art the Son of God, come down : He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him ; for he said, I am the Son of God (a)*. Thus he died under a cloud, and his enemies thought that by these sayings, they sufficiently confuted his pretensions to deity and veracity ; But in his resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God (*b*), the Father owning him as a God of peace ; the vile aspersions of his enemies were now wiped off : In the day of Christ's resurrection it appeared, that he was the only begotten Son of God (*c*). *The promise, said the apostle Paul, which was made to our fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again ; as it is also written in the second Psalm ; thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee (d)*. Thomas was no sooner convinced of the truth of Christ's resurrection, but he owned him as his Lord, and his God (*e*). The offence and reproach of the cross is ceased, in God's raising Christ from the dead ; for God would never have raised from the dead a false pretender to deity, or a false Christ.

2. The *quality* of Christ's person made his resurrection necessary. A person so innocent, holy, and glorious, as Christ was in himself, could not, after he had paid our debt, be longer continued in the prison of the grave. Justice made Christ's release as necessary on the account of his payment and dignity, as it had made his confinement in the grave necessary on the account of our guilt : Justice being once satisfied, the God of peace soon brought him again

(a) Mat. xxvii. 42, 43.

(b) Rom. i. 4.

(c) Psal. ii. 6.

(d) Acts xiii. 32, 33.

(e) John xx. 28.

from the dead ; and, indeed, it was not fit that the body, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, should lie long in a dark and gloomy grave.

3. Christ rose from the dead to confirm our *faith* and *hope* in God (*a*). Christ resurrection is an evidence that God was atoned by his death ; hence he is said to be raised for our justification (*b*). Hereby we do, or may know, there is pardon and eternal life for all true believers. The scriptures speak of him as one whom God *raised* (*c*) ; and declare, that through this man is preached the *forgiveness of sins* ; and that by him all who *believe are justified*. There is good anchor-hold for faith in Christ risen, and gone within the veil (*d*) ; whereas, if Christ had not risen, our faith had been vain, because it would have appeared that he was a false and insufficient Saviour.

4. If Christ had not risen, the *prophecies* and *types* of his resurrection had not been fulfilled. We often read, that such and such a thing was done, that the scripture might be fulfilled. David prophesied of Christ's resurrection in these words, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption* (*e*). Isaac and Jonah were types of Christ's resurrection : It was at least implicitly declared in those words, *Sit thou at my right hand* (*f*) ; and promised in those, *therefore shall he lift up the head*. Christ himself had foretold it (*g*) : On these accounts, it was therefore necessary, that Christ should rise from the dead.

5. The *work* which Christ had to do after his death, required his resurrection. The scripture has assured us (*h*), there is *one Mediator*, the man Christ Jesus ; but without his body Christ had not been man : The world is to be judged in righteousness by the *man Christ Jesus* (*i*). The

(*a*) 1 Pet. ii. 23.

(*b*) Rom. iv. 25.

(*c*) Acts xiii. 37—39.

(*d*) Heb. vi. 19.

(*e*) Psal. xvi. 10.

(*f*) Psal. cx. 1, 7.

(*g*) John ii. 19, 21.

(*h*) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(*i*) Acts xvii. 31.

bodies of the saints are to be fashioned according to Christ's glorious body (*a*); they who had pierced him are to see him and mourn (*b*). These things require his resurrection from the dead.

6. It was fit that that body which had bore its part in *labours* and *sufferings* should also enjoy its part in the following *glory*; and for that end it must be raised from the dead. It was always designed: Therefore Christ is represented, saying, *I have a goodly heritage: Thou wilt shew me the path of life; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore* (*c*).

7. Christ rose from the dead, in order to the *effusion* of the Holy Spirit. It was said before Christ's death (*d*), that the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not glorified: If it was necessary that Christ should be glorified, then it was necessary that Christ should rise from the dead, in order to the giving the Spirit; and when upon his exaltation, the Spirit was poured forth from on high, Peter might well say, *He being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, he hath shed forth this which you now see and hear* (*e*).

8. Christ rose from the dead, as a *pledge* and *assurance* of our resurrection; because *Jesus died and rose again* (*f*), therefore such as sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him. *Because I live*, said Christ, *you shall live also* (*g*). It is in and through the risen Jesus, that believers have the victory over death and the grave (*h*); their life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory. Thus for many weighty reasons it was necessary, that Christ should rise from the dead.

(*a*) Phil. iii. 21.

(*b*) Rev. i. 7.

(*c*) Psal. xvi. 6, 10.

(*d*) John vii. 39.

(*e*) Acts ii. 33.

(*f*) 1 Thess. iv. 14.

(*g*) John xiv. 9.

(*h*) Col. iii. 3, 4.

APPLICATION.

1. If Christ was raised from the dead, then it is unreasonable for sinners to thrust him down from his excellency. Did God exalt him, and shall we trample him under foot? Let us not degrade him in his person, or interest, to whom God has given a name above every name; so that at the name of Jesus every knee must bow (*a*), and every tongue must confess him, to the glory of God the Father. If Christ is risen from the dead, and crowned with glory and honour, it is then at their peril that sinners load him with contempt and disgrace. Christ deserves better treatment at their hands; they have little reason to expect a favourable sentence from that God who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, whilst they despise and reject him, indulge their lusts, disobey his law, slight his righteous judgments, and disregard the rewards which he gives, and the punishment he inflicts in the great day. How great is their guilt, and how dreadful will their punishment be, who neglect and refuse him, who is declared to be the Son of God (*b*), by his resurrection from the dead, and who now speaks to them from heaven?

2. We may take occasion to inquire what interest have we in the risen Jesus, what benefit we have reason to expect from his resurrection, and whether he was raised for our justification. To state and determine this important question, I shall refer to the decision of it which the scripture has given. There we are told, *Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death shall have no power* (*c*). Let us then thus examine ourselves. Has God begotten us again? Are we born of God? Has the immortal seed quickened and sanctified us? Then we have part in the risen Jesus, and the blessedness pro-

(*a*) Philip. ii. 11. (*b*) Heb. x. 29.—xii. 25. (*c*) Rev. xx. 6.

nounced on such as believe in him. Are we planted in the likeness of Christ's death? If so (*a*), we shall be planted in the likeness of his resurrection? Is sin mortified, has it lost our love? Then it has lost its dominion, and shall lose its being. Do we heartily desire to be delivered from the body of this death, and to be made completely holy? Do we breathe a spirit of love and faith to God, desire of his presence, and zeal for his glory? Are we brought to say, as Christ, Not my will, but thine be done? Do we endeavour to make use of Christ's death, to the same end for which he submitted (*b*), that we may die to sin and live to righteousness? If so, we have reason to think we are planted in the likeness of Christ's death, and shall be planted in the likeness of his resurrection. Are our affections set on things above (*c*)? Is our conversation in heaven? Do we love, and look, and long for the Saviour (*d*)? Then we have reason to hope that he rose for our justification; and that in due time he shall change our vile bodies, and make them like to his own glorious body? Have we our rest in, or dependence on, Christ? Are we raised together with him, and made to sit in heavenly places in him (*e*)? Do we go entirely out of ourselves, and place all our trust upon the merit and righteousness of our Redeemer, for life and salvation? And do we find complacency and satisfaction in the way and method of life and salvation by Christ, revealed in the gospel, and acquiesce in it, without seeking or desiring any other way of salvation, or any alteration in this way? If so, we have reason to hope we are of that happy number who shall not die eternally, who now live in Christ by faith, and shall hereafter live with him in body and soul for ever. If the bent of our hearts, and the scope of our actions be to do good, and to aspire after perfect

(*a*) Rom. vi. 5.(*b*) 1 Pet. ii. 24.(*c*) Colos. iii. 1.(*d*) Philip. iii. 20, 21.(*e*) Eph. ii. 6.

holiness, then we have reason to rejoice in Christ's resurrection, as designed for our justification. Paul aspired after the resurrection of the dead (*a*); not barely, that he might rise again, but that he might attain the holy heavenly spirit, which the saints have at the day, when their corruptible shall put on incorruption, and their mortal be swallowed of immortality. We are told by Christ himself, that they who have done good, shall come forth out of their graves to the resurrection of life (*b*): As the tree must first be good, before the fruit can be so; so the person must be renewed, or created in Christ Jesus, before he can perform good works; the works themselves must be good, for their matter, manner, and end; they must be what God commands, done as he requires, and with a design to please and honour him; and to be beneficial to others: And this doing good is not to be understood of a single act, but of a continued course; where the person is good and his principles and ends are good, his life and course will be so in some measure: For the fruits of the Spirit are in all goodness (*c*). Are we then risen with Christ, born or begotten again? Are we planted into the likeness of his death? Are our affections set on things above? Is the bent of our hearts, and the scope of our lives, to do good? If so, we may take great comfort in Christ's resurrection, as that on which we may build a lively hope of the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away; which is reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God, through faith to salvation (*d*).

3. Is Christ raised from the dead? then what encouragement have we to commit ourselves to him, and to cast all our care upon him, for he careth for us? It is now evident, that he is the Son of God, and that God is atoned by him,

(*a*) Phil. iii. 11.

(*c*) Ephes. v. 9.

(*b*) John v. 29.

(*d*) 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

and is become a God of peace through his blood. Christ therefore is able to keep what we commit to his trust (*a*), and to save us to the uttermost : He suffered, that he might bring us to God (*b*). After his sufferings he returned to his Father, but not alone, and empty handed, he brings his children with him : he doth not send them to God, and stay behind himself ; but he goes to God as their forerunner, and afterwards brings all his followers into the divine presence, and to the glory of heaven. We may safely trust God on his word ; he that raised up Christ from the dead, according to his promise (*c*), will not break his word with us, or exclude us from the heavenly inheritance : Christ has taken possession of it in the name and behalf of his people ; he is for us entered, and we have his promise (*d*), that he will come again, and receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also. A living exalted head will not finally leave any of its members in a dying inglorious state ; Christ is alive, and all the redeemed shall be saved by his life : He who conquered Satan, death, and the grave, even when he died, will not be conquered by them now he is alive ; he dies no more, and such as believe in him shall never die (*e*), or shall not die eternally, because Christ lives ; he liveth in them, and they shall live for ever with him. We then may safely trust in the Lord ; his saints may trust in the Lord for ever (*f*), for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. The true believer may trust, and not be afraid ; that justice, which discharged our surety, will not condemn our persons ; Christ's discharge is our's, his resurrection and glory virtually contain ours in them (*g*) : He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up. Jesus Christ's interest in our souls, or in the world, may be brought low for a time, but he has promised, that the gates of hell shall

(*a*) 2 Tim. i. 12.(*b*) 1 Pet. iii. 18.(*c*) Heb. vi. 20.(*d*) John xiv. 2.(*e*) John xi. 26.(*f*) Isa. xxvi. 4.(*g*) 2 Cor. iv. 14.

not prevail against that church which is built on the Son of the living God (*a*). Our blessed Saviour is in a condition to fulfil his promise ; for if men and devils, when they united all their force against him, and brought him to the dust of death, could not keep him under, or prevent his rising to immortality and supreme dominion ; then surely they shall not be able, now he is possessed of such a glorious empire, to disappoint his designs, or crush his interest. If the weakness of Christ was stronger than his enemies, what will his strength be ? If the dying Jesus was an overmatch for all the powers of darkness, surely the risen living Saviour is able entirely to subdue them ; especially considering, that God has put all things under his feet, and has given him to be head over all things to the church (*b*) ; what deadness soever there is in our frames, and what seeming death soever there may be upon our hopes and comforts, yet let us consider, we have a risen living head, who is able to give a resurrection to our faith, hope, and comfort ; and also to his interest in the world. O then let us not sorrow as others, who have no hope, who have no risen Saviour to raise their hope and joy above their fears and sorrows : Let us consider how low Christ was brought, and how high he rose after that, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds (*c*) : Let us take the apostle Paul for an example, who said, *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead ; who delivered us from so great a death, and still delivers, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver* (*d*).

4. If Christ has risen from the dead, then what reason is there for us all to take Christ's yoke upon us, and to yield to him ? For this end he revived and rose again (*e*), that he might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living ;

(*a*) Mat. xvi. 16, 18.

(*b*) Eph. i. 22.

(*c*) Heb. xii. 2, 3.

(*d*) 2 Cor. i. 9, 10.

(*e*) Rom. xiv. 6.

every knee shall bow to him, such as do it not in love and obedience, shall do it in fear and torment. How hard will it be for us to contradict and oppose the design both of Christ's death and of his new life, which is that he may be our Lord? As we know this, can any say in their hearts and practice, that he shall not reign over them?

5. Is Christ risen, then what full assurance have we, that Christ is no deceiver, but the very Christ, the true Messiah? God has owned him, raised him from the dead, and given him glory; he is therefore the real and great Shepherd of his sheep. He returned to his people with the same spirit of love and condescension, which had appeared in all his life before; he was full of grace and truth, as has been hinted: his resurrection should cause us, with Thomas, to own him as our Lord, and our God, as the true and only Saviour, who was not only manifested in the flesh, but was justified in the Spirit, when he was declared to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead.

6. Since Christ is risen, how necessary is it for them who are married to him that is risen from the dead (*a*), to bring forth fruit to God? Christians lie under the strongest obligations, not to live to themselves (*b*), but to him that died for them, and rose again. Does Christ live in heaven continually to intercede for us, and shall not we live on earth, to serve and glorify him? Is Christ never weary of doing for us, and shall we ever grow weary of his service? Could neither the sorrows of death, nor the glories of the resurrection take off his heart or hand from the work of our salvation? and shall either the frowns or flatteries of the world, cause us desert his interest, or the work which he calls us to? If we are risen with Christ, we ought to set our affections on things above (*c*), and have our conversation in heaven.

(*a*) Rom. vii. 4. (*b*) 2 Cor. v. 15. (*c*) Colos. iii. 1, 2.

7. Seeing Christ is risen, and the redeemed shall rise to a glorious immortality, let us be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord (*a*). There is reason to labour for Christ, seeing he has done, is doing, and will do such great and glorious things for us. We are not called to serve a weak or hard master, but to obey one who has a large heart, and a strong hand ; our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Let us then labour and not faint, remembering with faith, love, joy, and thankfulness, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to the gospel.

(*a*) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

OF

CHRIST'S ASCENSION ;

IN

TWO SERMONS.



SERMON I.

Preached AUGUST 23, 1727.

He who descended, is the same who also ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.—EPH. iv. 10.

HAVING formerly treated of Christ's *resurrection*, I come now to consider his *ascension*. We are to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goes. In the words now to be insisted on, we have the person ascending-described, his ascension affirmed, and the end of it declared.

1. We have a description of the *person* ascending. The same person ascended who descended into the lower parts of the earth ; first into the womb, afterwards into the grave. Thus one of the ancients has explained it (*a*) :—‘ He who descended, is plainly he who when he was in the heavens, by the incarnation came down to the earth, and by death went into the grave ; he is the same single person, not divers persons.’

(*a*) ‘Ο γὰρ καταβάς, δηλον ὅτι ἄνα ὦν κατέβη καὶ σαρκώμενος εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ θανὼν εἰς τὸν ᾄδην, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ, καὶ εἴς, ἐν ἄλλοις καὶ ἄλλοις.
Theophylact. in loc.

Christ's assuming our nature did not multiply his person or make him two persons; nor did his death or burial alter his person; but amidst all these changes of the human nature, his divine person remained the same. He who descended and ascended was the eternal Son of God. Local motion is not proper to his divine nature; but he having also another, that is, the human nature, with respect to that, he is said to descend and ascend: He descended when he assumed it; he ascended when he carried it up to heaven. Those acts are properly ascribed to his person, seeing they belong to a nature which is united to, and subsists in, his divine person. On this account we find Christ saying,—*I came forth from the Father, and came into the world; I leave the world, and go to the Father.* And elsewhere, *What if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up, where he was before (a).* The apostle, in my text, has very properly ascribed the descending and the ascending to the same person, to distinguish our Saviour from all others: Saints ascend, but they never descended; angels descend, but not into the lowest parts of the earth, nor do they ascend to *fill all things* as Christ did.

2. We have Christ's *ascension* affirmed, *He ascended up far above all heavens*; in his human nature he left the earth, and went up far above all the visible heavens, to the third heaven, where he sat down at the right hand of God: he went far above the ætherial and starry heavens, into the place of the blessed, called *the third heaven*, which must receive him, till the time of *the restitution of all things (b).* He went *within the veil (c)*, into the heavenly sanctuary, *to appear in the presence of God for us.* We have, as the apostle Paul has told us, *a great high priest, who is passed into, or, as it might be rendered, THROUGH the hea-*

(a) John xvi. 28.—John vi. 62.

(b) Acts iii. 21.

(c) Heb. vi. 20.

vens (*a*) ; as the high priest of old passed through the first and second veil into the most holy place (*b*), and was hid there, from the sight of priests and people ; so Christ, our great high priest, passed through the visible heavens into the third heaven, the holiest of all, which hides him from our sight.

3. In the words we have the *end* of this ascension declared, it was *that he might fill all things*. Soon after his ascension (*c*), he filled his apostles, ministers, and people with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus fulfilling the glorious work he had undertaken, *he ascended* (*d*), and *gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, till we all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. It is to be observed, that the *filling of all things*, ascribed to Christ, in my text, is subsequent to his ascension ; and therefore cannot be meant of his omnipresence as God, for so he filled all things, not only after his ascension, but at all times before.

Some would interpret Christ's *filling all things* of the ubiquity of his body ; but it is contrary to the nature of a bodily substance to be infinitely extended : If Christ's body had been so, then he could not properly have ascended ; for how could he leave one place to fill all places ? That which is every where, cannot change place. If the union of Christ's human nature with his divine person, rendered his body omnipresent, and so caused it to fill all things, then he should have filled all things from the moment of his incarnation, and not barely after his ascension. It is contrary to all the principles of sense and reason, as well as of revelation, to suppose a human body unmeasurably bigger than the earth ; nay, the heavens, which, at such a vast distance from the earth, surround it. One would think that the bare repre-

(*a*) Heb. iv. 14.—Owen in Loc,

(*b*) Lev. xvi. 17.

(*c*) Acts ii. 4.

(*d*) Ephes. iv. 12.

sensation of this monstrous opinion should be enough to confute it, and yet it has been, and still is warmly contended for by many. This is very far from being the thing intended by the apostle. Christ having fulfilled his work on earth, as Mediator, took his place in heaven, and took upon him to influence and order all things, in the church and in the world, on earth and in heaven, by his infinite wisdom, power, presence, spirit, and grace. As a great King, Christ resides in the chiefest place of his dominions, the highest heavens, yet his influence reacheth all persons and things. The earth is filled with his goodness, the heavens with his glorious and delightful presence, hell with his power and the fruits of his avenging justice, the church below with his Spirit and grace, and the whole world with his providential care and government. He ascended for this end, that he might thus fill all things. This being the nature and design of Christ's ascension, we have a great deal of reason to receive this useful truth, with attention, and raised affections.

The doctrinal proposition which I shall insist on is this ;
Christ ascended into the highest heavens, to fill all things, and finish the work of man's redemption.

In handling this point, I shall essay the following particulars,

- I. I shall inquire into the *reality* of Christ's ascension ; and the *benefit* of knowing it.
- II. I shall consider the *nature, circumstances, and manner* of it.
- III. I shall shew the *difference* between Christ's ascension and ours.
- IV. I shall assign some *reasons* of Christ's ascension.
- V. I shall mention some of the *fruits* and *consequents* of it. And,
- VI. I shall conclude with some practical improvement.

I. I shall inquire into the *reality* of Christ's ascension, and the *benefit* of knowing it.

1. The reality of it appears from the *types* and *prophecies* referring and relating to it. God would never have raised such an expectation of it, if he had not designed to answer it. Enoch and Elijah, as some think, were types of Christ's ascension: The carrying the ark into the tabernacle and temple undoubtedly was so. Hence the Psalmist has spoken of it (*a*), in such magnificent language as this; *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.*—Elsewhere he has said, *God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet* (*b*): Hereby was signified, according to some, Christ's ascending to his heavenly palace (*c*), and his throne. He is the King of glory, the Lord strong and mighty in battle; he conquered sin and Satan, death and hell, and then *ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men* (*d*). In which words it appears, that the Psalmist spoke of Christ, from the application of this passage to him, by the Holy Spirit (*e*); though they were used at first, at the removal of the ark, which was a type of Christ: the high-priest's entrance into the most holy place was figurative of Christ's ascension into heaven. *Christ entered not into the holy places, made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into*

(*a*) Psal. xxiv. 8.

(*b*) Psal. xlvii. 5.

(*c*) The ark being the figure of Christ, as that mountain (*Sion*) was of the heavens: The translation, or carrying back of the ark thither, may be looked upon as a figure of Christ's ascension, (after he had dwelt here a while, in a meaner place, and conquered death) to the high and holy place, where he is now at God's right hand, in the heavens. And with relation to this alone, the ancient fathers expound the Psalm; which may easily be applied in the mystical sense to that business. Bp. Patrick, argument of the Psalm.

(*d*) Psal. lxxviii. 18.

(*e*) Ephes. iv. 12.

heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us (a) ; but this had been all a fallacy and delusion, if Christ had not ascended into heaven. That Christ should do so, is foretold in the prophetic writings of the sweet Psalmist of Israel ; *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion : The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand (b).* From this testimony the apostle Peter proved Christ's ascension (c) ; for, said he, *David is not ascended ;* that is, in his whole person, to sit at the Father's right hand, or to have his enemies made his footstool : whence he inferred, that the Psalmist spoke of Christ, and his ascension. Some think that these words, *Open to me the gates of righteousness, and I will go into them (d),* relate to Christ's ascending into heaven, and opening the gates of that blessed temple, both for himself and his followers. Daniel in a vision saw the Son of man brought before the ancient of days (e), which could not relate to Christ's coming to judgment, for then he does not come to be served by all nations, but to reward them according to their works ; not to receive a kingdom, but to deliver it up to the Father. He ascended up in the clouds of heaven, and sat down at God's right hand, in order to rule in the midst of his enemies, and be served by a willing people. This is therefore what Daniel foresaw, and foretold ; and it being thus revealed and declared to be certain, it must certainly come to pass ; and that it did so, appears,

2. From express scripture testimony. Christ himself said, *I ascend to my Father : I go to prepare a place for you (f).* Of him it is said expressly, *It came to pass that whilst he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven (g).* Paul has asserted peremptorily, that he

(a) Heb. ix. 24.

(b) Psal. ii. 6.—Psal. cx. 1.

(c) Acts ii. 33, 34.

(d) Psal. cxviii. 19.

(e) Dan. vii. 13, 14.

(f) John xx. 17.—xiv. 2.

(g) Luke xxiv. 51.

was received up into glory, and that as our fore-runner, he has for us entered into heaven (*a*).

3. There were many *eye-witnesses* of Christ's ascension, which shews its reality: It was not done in a corner.—Whilst the apostles beheld (*b*), he was taken up, and they looked stedfastly towards heaven, as he went up; the angels at the same time assured them, he would come in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven. The persons who saw him ascend were his apostles and brethren, who had conversed with him forty days after his resurrection, and therefore were able to distinguish him from another person, and they had a clear view of him: They looked stedfastly towards heaven, as he went up leisurely, and as it were, step by step, that they might the longer see him, and be the better assured of his ascension. A cloud is said to receive him out of their sight; but that, I conceive, was not from the darkness of the cloud, but from the great distance of his body from them, ascending higher and higher, till the fleshly eye could no longer discern him. Mark and Luke (*c*), who were eye-witnesses of the fact, have attested it in their gospels; the holy angels also beheld it, and bore witness of it: The martyr Stephen before he died (*d*), had a sight of Christ in heaven, which is a farther evidence that he is ascended.

4. The reality of Christ's ascension might be largely proved from the *consequents* and *effects* of it: Such as the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, at the day of Pentecost, and afterwards. But of this and other consequents of Christ's ascension I must speak hereafter; and shall therefore only add here, that the apostle Paul has plainly declared these gifts to be the effect and fruit of Christ's ascension: *When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men* (*e*).

(*a*) 1 Tim. iii. 16.—Heb. vi. 20. (*b*) Acts i. 9, 10, 11.

(*c*) Mark xvi. 19.—Luke xxiv. 51. (*d*) Acts vii. 56.

(*e*) Eph. iv. 8.

Christ declared (*a*), he who believed in him, should do greater works than he had done, for extent, because he was to go to his Father. When we see these works done we may conclude, that Christ is indeed gone to the Father.

What remains on this head, is to consider the *benefit* that may attend the knowledge of Christ's ascension. It is very observable, that the very same morning on which Christ rose, in his first speech to Mary (*b*), and in his first message to his disciples, he spoke of it ; *I am not yet ascended, but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend.* Such an information might rectify the disciples' thoughts as to a temporal kingdom, and personal reign of Christ upon the earth, which they were very full and fond of. Christ foretold his ascension (*c*), that when it came to pass they might believe ; or that they might not think it to be a sudden and unexpected transport, such as Philip's was afterwards (*d*), when he was taken from the eunuch, but not out of the world ; but might, when they saw Christ taken up, believe, that he was going to his Father, as he had told them before-hand. Christ might also take this method, to prepare them for their parting with him, that they might not set their hearts on his bodily presence. It is good to have our affections on earthly enjoyments, even the best of them, curbed by the thoughts of their short continuance with us. Christ might farther intend by this message, to stir them up to prize and improve his company during the little time they were to enjoy it ; and by telling them of his ascension, they might be put in mind of his work and glory in heaven, and have their hearts and affections raised up more to the things above, The news of Christ's ascension might convince them, that though Christ had, on the cross, complained of his Father's forsaking him, yet he had not discarded him, but was now glorifying him with his own self. Christ would

(*a*) John xiv. 12.

(*c*) John xiv. 29.

(*b*) John xx. 17.

(*d*) Acts viii. 39.

let them know, that though he was going from them, yet it was not in anger, or with a design to forsake them, as they had forsaken him; nay, he owned them as brethren, and sent this gracious message to them, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*. The poor disciples were, no doubt, greatly dejected and confounded in themselves; with what face could they see him, whom they had deserted in his sufferings, and thought ill of afterwards? for they said, *We thought that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel (a)*. Notwithstanding all this, when Christ's hour was come, that he should depart out of the world to the Father (*b*), having loved his own, he loved them to the end, and indeed without measure, and without end; and therefore he let them know, that he was going to heaven to transact the affairs of that covenant in which God was his God and their God, through him, as one has explained it (*c*). Many benefits we also might receive from the knowledge of Christ's ascension, if we were not wanting to ourselves; therein we may see much of the wisdom, truth, and love of God, of the honour and glory of Christ, the stability of the church, and might find great support for our faith and hope, and encouragement to obedience, as will more fully appear afterwards. I now proceed;

II. I shall consider the *nature, circumstances, and manner* of Christ's ascension.

Christ's ascension was his real visible going up from earth to heaven, as man, and Mediator, to possess his own glory, and perfect his people's salvation. Concerning this ascension we may observe, that there was a real visible change of *place*, with respect to Christ's human nature; that nature passed from earth to heaven; the man Christ

(a) Luke xxiv. 21.

(b) John xiii. 1.

(c) Dr. Owen on Christ's person, p. 172.

Jesus was seen moving upwards, as far as the eye could follow him. He left the world (*a*), and went to the Father; nay, he so left the world, as to be no more in it, as to his bodily presence: But this doth not exclude his spiritual gracious presence; in this respect, he is with his people always, even to the end of the world (*b*); he makes his abode with them that love him, and keep his commandments; nor doth this local and visible ascending of Christ's body hinder his omnipresence as God, as such, he fills earth and heaven with his presence, and is in both at once; for he himself says (*c*), that he was in heaven, at the same time when he was speaking on earth. We may next consider the *power* by which Christ ascended. Sometimes we read, that the Father exalted him, sometimes Christ's ascension is spoken of as his own act, and herein there is no inconsistency; for Father and Son being one in nature, are also one in power and operation. Christ's ascension, though it raised up his soul and body to heaven, yet it did not change any of their essential properties; his body did not thereby become invisible and unlimited. We may also consider the *capacity* in which Christ ascended: It was, as Mediator, and his people's fore-runner (*d*). Christ's ascension was extraordinary, not only as to his person, but also as to his office, and the work he went about. He entered heaven by his own blood (*e*), as the great high-priest of his people, to appear in the presence of God for them. Let none then say, What is Christ's ascension to us? Our great concern is to get to heaven ourselves. Such should remember, that if Christ had not ascended, we never could; if he had not passed into heaven, as our high-priest, we could never have come to the throne of grace with freedom, much less could we have gone to the throne of glory, if Christ had not gone to prepare a

(*a*) Johu xvi. 28.—xvii. 11. (*b*) Matt. xxviii. 20.—John xiv. 29.

(*c*) John iii. 13.

(*d*) Heb. vi. 20.—iv. 14.

(*e*) Heb. ix. 12.

place for us. Is then Christ's ascension nothing to us? If it be not, it must be because we have no part in the heavenly glory. We are also to consider the *end* of Christ's ascension, which was his own and our glory. According to agreement, he was first to *suffer*, and then to *enter into his glory*; and he went to heaven to save his people to the uttermost, or to perfect their salvation, as will appear under another head.

Having thus given a general description of Christ's ascension, it may be useful next to consider the circumstances and manner of it.

1. As to the *time*; it was forty days after his resurrection (*a*). Christ denied himself the glory of heaven so long after his sufferings were finished, to confirm his people in the belief of his resurrection, to instruct them into the things of his kingdom, and to give them new proofs of his love and affection to them, which should make us willing to do much and suffer long for Christ, and willing to stay out of heaven, if we may do Christ and his interest any service on earth—if Christ preferred our good to his glory, should we not prefer his glory to our own?

2. We may consider the *place* whence Christ ascended, the mount of Olives; which was, as some say, about a mile in height, having three tops, of which that in the middle is the highest, and from that, as it is thought, Christ ascended; so that there was a fair open prospect, this mountain over-topping all the neighbouring ones; and Christ's ascension being from such a high place, so near to Jerusalem, might have been seen from most streets in Jerusalem, and the spectators might easily see he was not carried over it, and dropt on the other side, but that he went up straight to heaven. This mountain, from whence Christ ascended, had been the place of his agony and sore conflict (*b*); where he rolled in blood, thence he rose to glory: the same

(*a*) Acts i. 3.

(*b*) Luke xxii, 39, 40.

mountain giving him a passage both to his cross, and to his crown. Places as well as things are what God makes them to be to us; that which, at one time, is a place of weeping, may, at another time, be a place of joy and triumph.

3. Christ's ascension was in the *perfection* of the human nature; as he never took the sinful, so now he dropped the sinless infirmities of our nature, and went up in all the glory of which the humanity was capable. The glory in which the bodies of the saints shall be raised, shall be but a lower resemblance of the glory in which Christ was received up into heaven.

4. Christ's ascension was with great *magnificence* and *triumph*. He went up with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet: 'The cherubs continually singing, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of sabaoth*; the arch-angel proclaiming 'beforehand the coming of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit 'crying to the heavenly powers, with a commanding voice, ' *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may enter in*: But 'the heavenly powers said, *Who is this King of glory?* 'To whom the Spirit replied, *The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle*: For he has overcome the enemy; he armed himself with a human body against the tyranny of the devil; he quenched his fiery darts—he nailed him to the cross; and tasting death, when he was immortal, he overcame death, and came forth a conqueror, and 'taking the lost sheep upon his shoulders, he carried it to 'the heavenly fold,' as Chrysostom has elegantly expressed this matter (a). Christ did not go up to heaven alone;

(a) Ἀνέβη ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἀλαλαγμῷ, κύριος ἐν φωνῇ σάλπιγγος ἐν ἀλαλαγμῷ μὲν ὅτι ἐν ἀκαταπάσῳ φωνῇ, του τρισάγιον ὕμνον ἀναπέμπτει τῷ Θεῷ, ἐν φωνῇ δὲ σάλπιγγος ἀρχαγγελικῆς δηλαδὴ προσημαίνουσης αὐτῷ τὸν ἐν ἑβραίοις ἄνοδον· ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ταῖς ἄνω δυνάμεσι, τῇ προσηματικῇ ᾠῇ ἀνεκήρυττεν, Ἄρατε πύλας οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν, καὶ ὑπάρξῃτε πύλαι αἰώνιοι, καὶ εἰσελεύσεται ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης· εἶτα τὸ πνεῦμα, κύριος κορυταῖς, καὶ

he was attended with myriads of angels: Therefore, the Psalmist, speaking of Christ's ascension, cried out, *The chariots of God are twenty thousand; God is among them. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive (a)*. Christ carried the human nature up to the throne of glory, with the names of an innumerable company, that should follow him. This was a glorious triumph over Satan, and all the powers of darkness. This was such an event as was never seen before. What shouts of the blessed angels may we suppose! How was the whole city moved at his coming! as one speaks *(b)*. How honourable a reception did the Father give him! Christ did not intrude, but was received up into glory: And the Father said to him, *Sit thou at my right hand*. If the members of Christ shall be received with joy and gladness, with what marks of esteem did God receive Christ, their Head and Saviour? This was a day of joy and triumph—of honour and glory;—a bright and shining day.

5. Christ ascended, as he descended, *full of grace and truth*. He held his love to his people to the very last, and was expressing it that every moment he was parted from them: for, *whilst he blessed them, he was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven (c)*. He would let them know what a gracious heart he carried up with him into heaven, and what blessings they might expect he would pour down from thence upon them. As Jacob blessed his sons before he died; so Christ in a solemn manner, shewed

δυνατὸς ἐν πολέμῳ ἐνίκησε γὰρ τὸν πολέμιον ἀπλίσατο μετὰ τῆς τῆ διαβολῆς τυραννίδος, ἐν τῇ ἀνδρωπίνῳ σώματι, ἔσθισεν αὐτῆς τὰ πιτυρωμένα εἶλη καὶ τῷ σαυρῷ προσήλωθεῖς, καὶ θανάτῳ χυσιόμενος, ἀθανάτος ὑπάρχων ἐσκόλευσε τὸν ἄδην, καὶ νικητὴς ἀποδείχθη, ἀνέστη ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ τὸ πλαιώμενον προθαυτον ἐπιστρέψας, ἰδὼν ἀνέρχεται ἐκ' ὕμων, οὗτον φέρειν πρὸς τὰ ἐννεκοντα ἑννία τὰ ἀπλανῆ, τὰ ἐν τρεῖς ὅρεσι, τετέστι ἐν οὐρανοῖς νιμώμενα.—Chrysost. de ascensione Domini, ser. 5. p. 390.

(a) Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18.

(b) *Flav.* fountain of life, p. 137,

(c) Luke xxiv. 51.

his grace and condescension, in blessing his people, before he ascended.

6. Christ ascended to a glorious *place, work, and company*. It is very affecting to consider, what a glorious change Christ's ascension made in his condition, how different his state in heaven is, from what it had been on earth; formerly he lodged in a stable, now he is in the heavenly palace; on earth he lay in a manger, near to beasts, in heaven he sits upon a glorious throne, attended by myriads of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: in this world he was crowned with thorns, but when he ascended he was crowned with glory; here his visage was more marred than any man's, there his countenance is as the sun shining in his strength; he passed from the assaults of evil angels to the adorations of good ones; here below he was despised and rejected of men, as not fit for their society, but in the upper world he was received into glory, and placed at God's right hand, to be a delight to that honourable assembly, and to enjoy the most intimate fellowship and communion with God for ever; on earth he was buffeted and spit upon, in heaven he is worshipped with the most profound reverence, by all who attend the throne of God and of the Lamb; in his sufferings he had been forsaken by all his disciples, in his ascension he was attended with a great retinue of glorious angels; and as it is very probable, by those saints who rose, and went into the holy city after his resurrection, and appeared to many (*a*): And that, according to Beza (*b*), not as persons who should live among men, and die again, as

(*a*) Matt. xxvii 52, 53.

(*b*) *Declarat autem hæc apparitio istos non resurrexisse, ut iterum inter homines versarentur, rursus morituri, sicut Lazarus et alii, sed potius ut in vitam æternam Christum, cujus virtute resurrexerant, comitarentur; idque ut vivificæ Christi virtutis certa testimonia exstarent, ut in hunc locum scribens, recte, meo judicio, sentit Hieronymus.—Beza in loc.*

Lazarus and others did; but rather as persons who, being raised by Christ's power, were to accompany him into the other world, as living witnesses of his power: This also was Jerom's opinion (*a*). Many others I find favour the same opinion: Theophylact (*b*) has mentioned it as the opinion of some in his time; but whether to be received or no he did not determine: Paræus has suggested it to be the most probable opinion (*c*). Another celebrated expositor (*d*) has taken notice of it, as said by some, that they were raised to live in *Paradise* with Enoch and Elias. If this opinion be true, it must give us a pleasing idea of Christ's ascension: It must be most agreeable to view him who had poured out his soul to death, to redeem men from sin, Satan, death, and the grave, giving such a glorious specimen of the success of his undertaking, in carrying up with him a number of redeemed men, raised from the dead, perfect, holy, and glorious in body and spirit, into the celestial court, where he is for ever admired and praised by them; especially considering, how great a number of redeemed spirits they were there associated with, and the rule and dominion which Christ was to exercise to the end of time, yet so as not to forget, effectually to intercede for all who come to God by him. Viewing Christ's ascension in this light, what comfort may it yield us, what high thoughts may we have of it? This may greatly invite us to contemplate, love, and honour the ascending Redeemer, attended with such a

(*a*) Vide Hieron. in loc.

(*b*) Τίνας δὲ λέγεσθαι ὅτι μετὰ τὸ ἀναστῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν, ἀνέστησαν καὶ αὐτοί, καὶ ἔκ τινι ἀπέθανον· τοῦτο δὲ ἔκ οἷα εἰ δεῖ παραδίχασθαι. Theophylact. in loc.

(*c*) De his mortuis suscitatis movet quæstionem Justinus Martyr. Qu. 8. 5. Quæritur num resurrexerint immortales, potest hoc ignorari, probabilius non denuo mortuos fuisse, sed cum Christo resurgente conversatos ac tandem cum ascendente triumphum egisse. —Paræus in loc.

(*d*) Whitby on the place.

glorious retinue, and exchanging the labours and sorrows of a humbled life, and bitter death, for the rest and glory of a blessed immortality, in the most desirable assembly that ever was. Such who love Christ cannot but rejoice when they by faith see him, in these circumstances, going to the Father, and crowned with glory and honour.

7. When Christ ascended, he had not only an *adherent*, but an *inherent glory* ; not only the glory of his humanity, but the glory of his divinity, shining through it : this was veiled and hid during his abode on earth, whilst he was among sinners, and in a state of humiliation and suffering. His sufferings, as a cloud, intercepted the rays and beams of his uncreated glory ; but the veil being taken away, at his ascension, how did they irradiate his human nature ! The angels told the spectators, that Christ should come again, in like manner as they saw him go into heaven. When he comes again, it shall be in *power and great glory*, in *his own and his Father's glory* ; with such glory therefore he ascended to heaven. We have no account of his appearing in this glory to his disciples, during his forty days converse with them, after his resurrection ; nor indeed were they in a condition to bear it : Paul was struck blind, and John fell at Christ's feet as dead, upon that sight of it which they had after his ascension ; those who ascended with him were qualified to behold it, and those who on earth were the spectators of his ascension, were better able to bear it at a distance, and as he was going from them, than they could have done, had he remained with them. Christ could in a moment, as he did in his transfiguration, appear in his glory, and when he pleased could cast a veil upon it ; but when he was taken up into the air, and was going from weak sinful mortal creatures, there was no farther occasion to hide it ; nay, the discovery of it might be a greater torment to the devil.

8. Christ ascended to continue long in that *glorious condition*. Some men are suddenly raised very high, and as

quickly degraded ; for man being in honour abides not : but Christ has been now near seventeen hundred years, in the high station to which he ascended, and will hold it, till he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

9. When Christ ascended, *he led captivity captive*. As great princes, in former times, after some great victory, used to lead their conquered enemies in triumph, in view of the people, when they returned to their capital city ; so Christ led Satan captive, in his return to heaven. Some have thought, that the fall of the devil was owing to the early notice in heaven, of Christ's taking human nature, and therein being set over all creatures, angels, and men : it is supposed, that those high spirits could not brook it, that such an inferior nature should be advanced above them, and have the government of the whole world ; and so they left their first habitation, and hasted down to earth, to oppose, and, if possible, to prevent that design ; and for that end, first tempted and ruined the human nature in Adam, and afterwards sought to destroy it in Christ. Our Immanuel having by death destroyed the devil, led him captive, and triumphed over him, in a glorious manner, by carrying up the human nature, united to his own person, as glorious as it was possible to be raised, not only above devils, but above the highest angels, in dominion and glory, and placed it upon a throne next to his all-mighty Father : this must make Christ's ascension such a victory and triumph over Satan, as was as much the devil's torment as it will be the saints' delight and honour for ever.

APPLICATION.

Reserving the particular improvement of the doctrine to the next discourse, I shall conclude this with a general exhortation to have our *conversation in heaven* (a), whither

(a) Phil. iii. 20.

Christ is gone ; and to *look for, and hasten to the coming of the day of Christ (a)*. Is he ascended, and shall we not follow him in our thoughts, desires, and affections ? Can we expect to rest on earth, when our Saviour has left it ? Should we not, with the blessed apostle Paul (*b*), leave the things that are behind, and press forward to those before ? If by any means we might attain to be with Christ, which is far better ? If the disciples were for dying with Lazarus, shall not we much rather be for ascending with, or after Christ ? We have seen men who never enjoyed themselves, or any thing in the world, after some dear friend or relation was gone out of it : and shall not the Christian be crucified to the world, now his Saviour has left it, and is ascended up into heaven ? Though wicked men call it folly and fancy for us to place our desires and hopes upon heavenly things ? surely the Christian can give a good reason for it ; his Redeemer, and consequently his treasure is in heaven ; and where the treasure is, the heart should be (*c*). Let us often think whither Christ is gone, and for what end ; it is to prepare a place for his people (*d*), and therefore they had need prepare to ascend thither, and to live with Christ there (*e*). Faith is a sort of ascension, it carries up the soul to Christ, in spiritual desires and contemplations ; and such views of his glory are a means of changing the soul into his image (*f*), and of fitting it to follow him into heaven, to be with him for ever.

We are to look to the ascended Jesus for repentance and remission of sins (*g*). He who was able to raise up himself from the grave, and to ascend to a throne of glory, is able to quicken our souls, at present, and our bodies hereafter, and to bring us to God, according to his own word, which was ; *I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men to me (h)*.

(a) 2 Pet. iii. 12.

(d) John xiv. 2.

(g) Acts xv. 31.

(b) Phil. iii. 13, &c.

(e) Colos. ii. 12.

(h) John xii. 32.

(c) Luke xii. 34.

(f) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

He has a power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself (*a*) : what reason then have we to commit our souls to him, and to cast our care upon him? Can he, or will he ever be unmindful of the end of his ascension, which was to fill all things; to bring all the saints to a perfect man? What encouragement then have we to beg of him, to work in us, to will and to do, of his own good pleasure, that we may work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Let those whose hearts and affections are set upon the earth remember, that they will never find a Saviour or salvation there : Christ, in whom alone is salvation, is gone to heaven, and they who do not follow him with their love and affections now, will never follow him in their persons to that glory unto which he went, when he ascended up far above all heavens to fill all things.



SERMON II.

Preached AUGUST 29, 1727.

He who descended, is the same also who ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.—EPHES. iv. 10.

HAVING, in a former discourse upon these words, inquired into the reality of Christ's ascension, and the benefit which may attend the knowledge of it; in the next place I endeavoured to describe the nature, circumstances, and manner of Christ's ascension. I now proceed; and therefore,

(*a*) Phil. iii. 20, 21.

III. I shall shew the *agreement* and *difference* between Christ's ascension and ours. This may help us to conceive more clearly of the thing itself, and may cause us more highly to esteem and value the ascended Redeemer.

There are some things wherein Christ's ascension, and that of his people agree: Christ left the earth and went up to heaven, and so shall his people, that where he is, there they may be (*a*): Christ was received up into glory; and when he appears, believers shall appear with him in glory (*b*): Christ at his ascension was attended by the holy angels; Christians, when they die, are carried by angels into Abraham's bosom (*c*): Christ ascended in the entire human nature, having put off all natural infirmities; and so shall the saints, at the great day, be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (*d*): Christ ascended to his God and Father, and so shall the Christian: God is the God and Father of Christ's human nature, both by creation and covenant; and in the same respect is he to whom the saints ascend, their God and Father: Christ at his ascension entered into his rest, and so shall the Christian; *for there remains a rest for the people of God* (*e*): as Christ had done with labour and sorrow, when he exchanged earth for heaven; so Christians, in their souls, at death, and in their whole persons at the resurrection, rest from their labours, and enter into the realms of peace, where sorrow and sighing fly away; for to such as are troubled here below (*f*), rest remains, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels.

Though in the aforesaid respects Christ's ascension and that of Christians agree, yet there are other things wherein they differ; Christ ascended by his own power, but Christians only by his, for he receives them to himself; and it is

(*a*) John xiv. 3.

(*b*) Col. iii. 4.

(*c*) Luke xvi. 26.

(*d*) 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

(*e*) Heb. iv. 10.

(*f*) 2 Thess. i. 7.

a work of infinite power to raise a creature, and much more one that had been a sinner, to glory ; therefore it is Christ's work, and not man's : Christ first descended, and then ascended ; but the Christian did not first come down from heaven, and then go up again : Christ was in heaven in one nature, before he ascended thither in the other ; but the Christian cannot be in heaven and on earth at once, as he has not two natures, much less one that is infinite and omnipresent : With respect to Christ, it was *God manifested in the flesh*, that was *received up into glory* ; but this is too high for Christians ; they have no claim to deity : Christ ascended in a public capacity, Christians in a private one ; he as fore-runner, his people as followers ; he as head, they as members ; he as the Lord of glory, they only as the subjects of it ; he as great high-priest, his people as those that receive the atonement ; he as advocate, they as his clients : Christ entered heaven by his own blood, we only by his ; for no man goes to the Father but by him (*a*) : Christ ascended to sit down on the right hand of God ; Christians to worship before his throne ; they sit down with him on his throne, with respect to his victory over their enemies, but they fall down before the throne (*b*), with respect to their subjection to the ascended Redeemer : Christ ascended to fill all things ; Christians to fill up the place in his mystical body : Christ ascended to give eternal life ; believers go to heaven to receive and enjoy it : Christ ascended to give gifts to men ; Christians ascend to praise him for what they have received : Christ ascended to govern the world, to be a Prince and a Saviour ; but departed saints have no more to do under the sun, their places know them no more, nor have they any more an influence upon human affairs : the ascended Jesus is head over all things to the church ; but the ascended saints are fully satisfied with being members of that glorified

(*a*) John xiv. 6.

(*b*) Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

body, of which Christ is the head ; Christ ascended to dispense grace as well as gifts to men ; but the glorified saints are no commissioners of the heavenly treasury : when Christ ascended, he established and confirmed a certain union and communion between himself and the church militant ; he carried up our flesh to heaven, and sent down his spirit to animate, rule, and govern his church below ; thus he *fills all things*. But no such thing as this can be said of the ascending Christian : Christ, when he ascended, carried up our nature, as a pledge of our future glory : but Christians when they ascend are only examples, not pledges of that glory to their fellow Christians in this world : Christ when he ascended, entered into a glory peculiarly his own ; Christians, when they go to heaven enter into the joy of their Lord : Christ ascended to descend again ; but when the saints ascend, in the great day, they descend no more, but are for ever with the Lord.

Thus we see wherein Christ's ascension and that of his people agree, and wherein they differ : and we may learn from the whole, how much Christ has the pre-eminence ; he is highly exalted, and has a name above every name.

IV. I shall assign some *reasons* of Christ's ascension.

The disciples knew not how to bear the thoughts of Christ's departure (*a*) ; when he had told them of it, *sorrow filled their hearts*. They were fond of his bodily presence ; and who would not have desired the company of one so holy, harmless, and undefiled ; so wise, gracious, and able to defend and help them, as they knew him to be ? for whilst he had been with them, in the world, he had kept them from the evil (*b*) : But when he was gone, they knew they should be as sheep among wolves, killed all the day long, and counted fit for nothing but the slaughter. Christ's prayers, sermons, and miracles must have been very delightful and useful to them : how then could they bear the

(*a*) John xvi. 6.

(*b*) John xvii. 12.

thoughts of parting with him, whom they had seen as the *only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (a) ? With what peculiar endearing tenderness and condescension had he treated them since his resurrection ? How did their hearts burn within them whilst he talked with them, and opened to them the scriptures ? How had his presence calmed their fears, subdued their unbelief, and given them peace and joy ? How then could they be willing he should go away from them ? Many reasons we may suppose them to have against his departure, had it been lawful to have alleged them : they might have said, that Christ's leaving the earth, no more to be seen upon it, would confirm the report which the Jews so confidently spread, that he was not risen, and that his disciples had stole away his body, and it was no where to be found ; whereas his continuance, and open appearance in the world, his working miracles, and shewing himself in his God-like majesty, might have convinced, or at least, have confounded his enemies, and have been a comfort and encouragement to his disciples and followers ; but to leave them to the insults of enemies, after all the expectations he had given them, of defending and enlarging his kingdom in the world, must seem a deserting it, either through diffidence or anger : It might be taken as if he had more regard to his own rest and glory in heaven, than to their peace and welfare on earth. His appearance to them after his resurrection had caused them to worship him ; and might they not apprehend, that his presence might have had the same good effect upon others, as they had found it to have upon themselves. These and other reasons might they have urged against Christ's ascension ; but as Christ had told them, it was expedient for them (b), that he should go away, how plausible or strong soever their allegations might seem to be ; there were superior reasons for

(a) John i. 14.

(b) John xvi. 17.

his leaving this world, and going to the Father; such as follow:

1. The Father's *love* to him required it. He, as God-man mediator, was the person in whom God was peculiarly delighted; and was it convenient that the chief favourite should live in exile from the heavenly court? that he who was always the Father's delight, should never see his face, or be admitted into his immediate presence? It had been necessary for him for a time, to abide in this world, that he might finish the work which the Father had given him to do here; but when that was accomplished, why should he stay any longer? Would not his affectionate Father insist upon his being present in the court of heaven? Christ had neither forfeited nor lost his Father's love; for he said, *I abide in his love (a)*: Therefore it was fit he should abide in his presence. God loved him before the foundations of the world, and therefore gave him a glory, which is peculiarly his own (*b*). If Christ's love to the redeemed will not be satisfied, without their being where he is, surely the Father's love to our Redeemer would as strongly insist upon his being with him in glory. It was necessary therefore not only, that Christ should rise from the dead, but that he should ascend up to the Father.

2. It was necessary because it was *decreed, foretold, and promised*; therefore it must come to pass. God has decreed and declared the decree, that his King should be placed upon his holy hill of Sion (*c*); that Christ should be exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to be Lord of all, who must sit at the Father's right hand, till all his enemies are made his footstool (*d*). Christ expected eternal pleasures at the Father's right hand, because he had promised it. The decree, the types, the prophecies, the promises all set this joy before Christ; and therefore he depended upon it: and

(a) John xv. 10. (b) John xvii. 24.

(c) Psal. ii. 6, 7.—Acts v. 31.—Psal. cx. 1. (d) Psal. xvi. 11

when the time drew nigh, he thus prayed for it ; *Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son. O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self (a)*. Therefore it must be, seeing God had not only promised it, but had declared that his covenant should stand fast with Christ (*f*), and that his throne should be as the days of heaven, that he should be exalted and extolled, and be very high ; and the scriptures cannot be broken. Christ upbraided his disciples with folly for not apprehending a necessity of his entering into glory (*b*), because it was so plainly revealed in the old testament : The prophets spoke not only of the sufferings of Christ, but also of the glory that should follow. It was therefore necessary that Christ should ascend to the throne of his glory. As Joseph was taken from the prison, not to lead an obscure life, but to sit upon Pharaoh's throne, and to feed and rule the kingdom ; so Christ was raised from the dead, not to live an inglorious life on earth, but to ascend, and sit down with his Father upon his throne in heaven, and to rule and govern both the church and the world.

3. Christ's ascension was necessary with respect to his *person* and *circumstances*. He was too great and too good to live any longer in our world, than was absolutely necessary : He had endured the contradiction of sinners long enough in his state of humiliation, and so ought not to suffer, by being with them, when his suffering state was at an end ; it was fit, that when he had done his work on earth, he should go to his rest in heaven : he was fully ripe for glory ; who should ascend into God's holy hill, if he did not ? who had hands so clean, and heart so pure, as Christ had ? If we consider him as God manifest in the flesh, we cannot think it proper for him always to abide on the earth, who is so near allied to heaven. It would have been a hardship upon our Saviour always to have veiled his glory, and

(a) John xvii. 1. (b) Psal. lxxxix. 26, 27, 28.—Isa. lli. 13.

(c) Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

the eyes of mortal creatures could not have bore the full display of it. Earth then was no fit place for the residence of the risen Jesus : Heaven is a place where they know better how to bear the brightness of his glory, and to value and improve his blessed presence. His ascension to his throne, as God-man mediator, was a new glory in heaven, as delightful to the blessed there, as it would have been terrible to the wicked, and insupportable to the saints in this world. It was therefore proper for him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, to sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (a).

4. Christ ascended to fulfil the *office* he had undertaken. He continues under the character of a mediator, and to take care of his people. He was to be their advocate, and therefore must appear in the celestial court. As a prophet, he was to shed down the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, which was not to be given till he was glorified : For thus he said, *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come* (b). As a priest, he entered the heavenly sanctuary (c), with his own blood : on earth there was no room for him to exercise his priestly function ; for he had neither such a sacrifice or incense to present, as were appointed by the law : nor was there any need for him to offer up himself again, having by one offering perfected for ever all them that are sanctified (d). His work lay not on earth, but in heaven ; and therefore it was necessary for him to ascend thither : as he is a priest of a higher order than Aaron, and offered a more excellent sacrifice than those under the law ; so it was fit that he should be made higher than the heavens, to plead the virtue and merit of it in the heavenly sanctuary : as he was the most holy priest, it was fit that he should officiate in an undefiled sanctuary ; as he was the great high priest, it was proper he should have the highest sanctuary ; as he was call-

(a) Heb. i. 2, 3.

(b) John xvi. 7.

(c) Heb. viii. 4.

(d) Heb. x. 14.

led immediately by God, it was necessary that he should officiate immediately before him. As Christ, after his resurrection, bore the character of a King, it was requisite he should ascend the throne of his kingdom, and be crowned, as we are told he was; this was done, when God set him at his own right hand (*a*), in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, might and dominion.—Christ, by the parable of a Nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom (*b*), signified his ascending up far above all heavens; his being brought before the ancient of days, Daniel's vision signified, that to him was to be given a kingdom (*c*). At Christ's ascension, the heavenly gates were opened, and the King of glory entered in (*d*). It was not decent, that he who was raised above princes and angels in power, should be below them in place; that the King should dwell more meanly than some of his subjects; or that he should be degraded at the foot-stool, whilst some of them are admitted so near the throne: this would not have been consistent with his royal dignity and honour. It was necessary then, that Christ should ascend to the throne of his universal kingdom.

5. It was necessary that he should ascend, that the *Father* might be glorified. *Father*, (said he), *glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee* (*e*). He had glorified him on earth; but the Father was to be farther glorified, by his high exaltation, in heaven, and the subjection of all things to him: when every knee bows, and every tongue confesses to him, it is to the glory of God the Father (*f*). God is glorified in the excellencies which Christ displays, and the honours which he receives in his exalted station:—Hence it was necessary that he should enter into his glory.

6. It was necessary that he should ascend, that he might

(*a*) Eph. i. 20, 21.

(*b*) Luke xix. 12.

(*c*) Dan. vii. 13, 14.

(*d*) Psal. xxiv. 7.

(*e*) John xvii. 1.

(*f*) Phil. ii. 9—11.

accomplish the *great things* which he had to do for his people. He must go to *prepare a place for them* (a). As the ark of old went before the people (b), to search out a resting-place for Israel; so Christ went first to Mount Calvary, and after that to Mount Sion, to prepare a place for his people. The kingdom, indeed, was prepared from the *foundation of the world* (c), as to God's purpose and appointment: But yet Christ went to prepare it (d); partly, by taking possession of it for his people, for, as their forerunner, he entered upon the inheritance for them (e). The accuser of the brethren shall never make void their claim, while Christ keeps possession for them; and Satan can no more turn him out, than he could keep him out. Christ prepares a place for his people, by keeping open the way into the holiest of all: They who come to God by him, attain perfect salvation, because Christ ascended to heaven, and ever lives there, to make intercession for them (f). It is true, the elect who died before Christ's incarnation, found a place prepared for them: But then, it was for the sake, and upon the credit, of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. When Christ ascended, it was for them as well as for us that he made his public entry: As Joseph, by his sufferings and glory in Egypt, made way for the entertainment of his father's family there, both elder and younger; so Christ, by his sufferings, and ascension to the throne of his glory, makes way for all his people to come to God, and enjoy him for ever. Whenever, or wheresoever believers die, heaven is ready for them; for Christ ascended to prepare it for them. The acceptance of their prayers and services at present, is owing to what Christ doth for them, in his ascended state: He went up to appear before the throne of God, with his golden censer, and much incense (g), to offer it with the prayers of all saints; he

(a) John xiv. 2.

(b) Numb. x. 33.

(c) Mat. xxv. 34.

(d) John xiv. 2.

(e) Heb. vi. 20.

(f) Heb. vii. 25.

(g) Rev. viii. 4.

bears our petitions to his Father: And what should the believers on earth do, without such a friend in heaven? As Satan accuses the brethren day and night (*a*), it was necessary they should have one to speak and plead for them before God: And who is so fit, or who could do it so well as Christ? Who knows all the depths of Satan, all God's counsels, all his people's sins and wants, and is able to shew a sacrifice that made atonement for their highest offences, and purchased an exceeding weight of glory for them? Christ is the only fit person to implead, and cast down the accuser of the brethren, and maintain the cause of his poor people: And for this end it was necessary, that he should appear before God, that the answer may be made where the indictment is laid. And thus we see what Christ was to do in heaven; for his people on earth required his presence there. It was necessary on the account of the saints in heaven: many lived and died with hopes of seeing and enjoying him there. Job, a long time before Christ's incarnation, comforted himself, under great afflictions, with the expectation of seeing God in the flesh (*b*). Now, had not Christ ascended, what a disappointment would it have been to them? How strange must it have been to them, for the Saviour not to have appeared in heaven, when he had done his work on earth? They who had never seen him in the flesh, though they had much desired it, could not but long to see him in heaven, who had died for them on earth; to see him in their own nature, who is over all, God blessed for ever. This must, to the patriarchs, prophets, and righteous men of ancient time, who were gone to heaven before him, be very desirable: And had he not ascended, might it not have created a jealousy in the inhabitants of heaven, if jealousy had any place there, that the Saviour had miscarried in his work, and missed his way to his throne; that he was detained a prisoner in the hands of justice, and

(*a*) Rev. xii. 10.

(*b*) Job xix. 25,

that all the prophecies of his glory were mere delusions. It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should ascend, to secure the joy and comfort of the glorified saints, as well as to provide for the safety and salvation of those who yet remain in the warfare here below.

7. It was necessary for Christ to ascend, that *Christians* might live by faith. God gave him glory (a), that our faith and hope might be in God; for, *blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed* (b). Men are much for sensitive evidence, and for knowing Christ after the flesh; they are ready to suppose that his fleshly presence would do great things; but how was he treated when he dwelt among men? and should he appear again in the form of a servant, would he meet with any better usage? When good old Simeon had seen Christ in the flesh (c), he desired to see nothing more in this world; which was a sign he did not place his happiness in Christ's fleshly presence on earth. Christ saw it necessary to withdraw his bodily presence, lest his people should grow carnal: He would not have them trust to his flesh, but to his promise, merit, grace, intercession and power. When the disciples had his bodily presence, they were slow of heart to believe; but after his ascension, their faith was more clear and strong. A sight of Christ by faith, in his ascended state, is far better than a sight of him in his humiliation, in the flesh; faith now can see him, not in the conflict, as he then was, but in the conquest and triumph. Christ ascended, that our faith and love might follow him: therefore we are thus advised in scripture (d); *Set your affections on the things above, where Christ is at the right hand of God; run with patience the race set before you, looking to Jesus.* Though he is gone to heaven, yet faith is to look up to him there; and the Christian is to have his conversation there, where his Savi.

(a) 1 Pet. i. 21.

(b) John xx. 29.

(c) Luke ii. 29, 30.

(d) Col. iii. 1.—Heb. xii. 1.

our is (*a*). It is a noble and delightful life, to live by faith (*b*); to love, and believingly to rejoice in that Saviour (*c*), whom we never saw in the flesh; for thus we honour God's truth, at the same time that we get a glimpse of Christ's glory, and nourish a lively hope of seeing him, as he is, immediately and for ever in glory.

8. It was necessary that Christ should ascend on his *own account*, that he might possess and enjoy that glory (*d*), which he was to enter into. The prophets (*e*) spoke of the *glories* (*f*), that should follow Christ's sufferings. There were many glories that Christ enjoyed; when he ascended he filled both worlds with his glory: He ascended up into glory in heaven, and sent down his Spirit to glorify him on earth (*g*,) by a manifestation of his glory. The glory of his person, providence, righteousness, grace, and love; the glory of his human nature, of his victory over sin, Satan, death, and hell: This has raised a new triumph in heaven, and the sound of it has gone to the ends of the world; on which account the Psalmist said, *Let the whole earth be filled with his glory* (*h*). It was necessary therefore that Christ should ascend to heaven, to possess his mediatorial glory, both in the upper and lower world.

V. I shall mention some of the *consequents* and *effects* of Christ's ascension.

1. Christ being ascended, poured out his *Spirit*. The Psalmist said, *He received gifts for men* (*i*); the apostle Paul, that *he gave gifts to men* (*k*), which are not inconsistent; for he received them, in order to bestow them on men: Therefore, as the apostle Peter said, *being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the fa-*

(*a*) Phil. iii. 20.

(*b*) Gal. ii. 20.

(*c*) 1 Pet. i. 1.

(*d*) Luke xxiv. 29.

(*e*) 1 Pet. i. 11.

(*f*) *Tὰς δόξας.*

(*g*) John xvi. 14.

(*h*) Psal. lxxii. 19.

(*i*) Psal. lxxviii. 11

(*k*) Eph. iv. 8.

ther the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed him forth (a). The spirit was a glorious and comprehensive gift, inclusive of many others, the fountain of all the ordinary and extraordinary gifts conferred upon men in the primitive times, or since. When Christ ascended, he sent the Spirit to supply his place, according to this promise, *If I depart, I will send him to you* (b). This sending doth not argue an inferiority of nature in the person sent, but only an order of working : The Spirit had been dispensed by Christ in all ages, for it was the Spirit of Christ (c), which was in the prophets ; but the miraculous, and more abundant pouring out of the Spirit, on all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, was a glory reserved for Christ's ascension : This was the glory of the apostles and primitive Christians ; hence sprung their courage and comfort, their patience and unwearied diligence, in the work of the Lord : this effusion of the Spirit gave being to the gospel church ; she derives her support and continuance to the end of the world, from the Spirit given by Christ, at and since his ascension. As great princes, upon their accession to the crown, scatter their gifts and bounty among the people ; so Christ, being crowned with spiritual glory and honour, according to the nature of his kingdom, which is not of this world, bestowed his royal gifts, and shed his spirit abundantly on the apostles and primitive Christians.

2. Another effect or consequent of Christ's ascension is his *intercession* : He went up to heaven (d), to appear in the presence of God for his people ; he ever lives in heaven to make intercession for them. But designing to handle this by itself hereafter, I shall not enlarge upon it at present.

3. A *conviction of righteousness*, is a consequent of Christ's going to the Father, as Christ himself foretold it should be ; *He, (the Spirit) shall convince the world*

(a) Acts ii. 33.

(b) John xvi. 7.

(c) 1 Pet i. 11.

(d) Heb. ix. 24.

of righteousness, because I go to the Father(a). Christ's ascension and admission into the presence and glory of his Father, made it appear, that he was God's righteous servant, and no deceiver; and that he had fulfilled all the righteousness required of the redeemer. His holy and righteous Father would never have received him up into glory, if there had been any imperfection in his obedience: The Father did not send him back from heaven to do his work over again, or to supply any thing that was wanting, which made it evident, that he is the perfecting end of the law for righteousness (b).

4. Our encouragement to approach the throne of grace is another consequent of Christ's ascension: *We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens for us; Let us therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace (c)*. Christ is ascended, and presents the prayers of all saints, with much incense. All the acceptance which the prayers of the saints (d), in all ages, have met with, has been for the sake of Christ's merits and intercession; when we know that he appears before the throne, and pleads actual payment of the price of redemption, it is a great encouragement to faith and prayer. The very name of the ascending Jesus gives a prevalency to believing prayer; for whatsoever we ask the Father in his name he will give to us (e).

5. Christ's ascension assures us of the conquest of our spiritual enemies: He led Satan captive, when he ascended; and having overcome him, what can stand before him? He that has defeated the grand enemy, will subdue all the rest; seeing they have begun to fall before him, they shall surely fall before him.

6. Christ's ascension is a pledge and assurance of his people's being received into glory. Christ said, *If I go away I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I*

(a) John xvi. 8.

(b) Rom. x. 4.

(c) Heb. iv. 14, 16.

(d) Rev. viii. 4.

(e) John xvi. 23, 24.

am, there you may be also (a). Christ carried our nature up to heaven, to take livery and seisin of it for us; and he sent his Spirit down, to be in his people an earnest of their future glory, or of their following him into the heavenly rest: where should the members be but with their head, the followers but with their forerunner? Is Christ gone to prepare a place for his people, and shall they never inhabit it? shall those mansions be left empty, which Christ has provided for them? Christ, in carrying our nature into heaven, has made it evident, that it is capable of celestial glory. When Christ ascended, he went into heaven, as his people's representative, on which account believers are said (b), to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. They sit there in Christ now, and therefore they shall be with him hereafter. There is no such trifling in heaven, as first to admit them, in their fore-runner, and then shut them out in person: When the time of possession is come, Christ, who reconciled them by his death, saves them by his heavenly life, he keeps them by his power, on earth, and reserves every one his place, by his presence in heaven, and will cause him to fill it up. Thus we taste another fruit (c), which grows on the tree of life, in the midst of the paradise of God, even an assurance of eternal life, by Christ's entrance into it, in his people's name and nature.

I shall conclude this discourse and subject, with the use and improvement, which may be made of the doctrine.

APPLICATION.

1. Is Christ ascended? then how *pleasing* to God is man's redemption? The honour which he has done our Saviour, is a clear evidence of the delight he has in our salvation. Can we entertain a thought to the contrary, when we see our dear Saviour so well received in the celestial court,

(a) John xvi. 3.

(b) Eph. ii. 6.

(c) Rev. xxii. 2.

and crowned with glory and honour there (*a*)? Christ's ascension shews how well pleased God is in his servant, and in his service. Christ ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God: He must never have taken one step towards heaven, if God had not been pleased with his work on earth: If God had not smelt a sweet savour in his offerings here below, Christ had never been admitted to shew and plead it above. His going to the Father is a convincing proof, that he allowed and delighted in the righteousness which he fulfilled in this world (*b*): When we see him ascending, we may then as it were hear the Father saying, *Behold the servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delights* (*c*); herein we see the pleasure of the Lord, prospering in the hands of Christ.

2. Is Christ ascended? then what *encouragement* is there for faith and prayer, love and praise? Faith may depend upon the perfection of his merit, and the prevalence of his intercession, and the accomplishment of all his promises: Seeing Christ is made higher than the heavens, love may find enough in the ascended Saviour, to feed all its flames; in him there is the most delightful union of greatness and goodness, grace and glory. The exaltation of his state, and the condescension of his behaviour, is very engaging, and may cause the believer to say, he is altogether lovely, and the chiefest of ten thousand. Has Christ then ascended, and do our hearts descend? To have our head in heaven and our hearts in the earth, is a very unbecoming separation. Did Christ leave the world, and shall we cleave faster to it? Did he ascend above it, and are we buried in the cares or pleasures of it? How dishonourable and displeasing to Christ must this be? How serene and calm should we be, were our affections where our Saviour is? How then should we look down upon worldly joys and sorrows, as little things, which

(*a*) Heb. ii. 9. (*b*) John xvi. 3, (*c*) Isa. lxii. 1. lili. 10.

ought not much to move us? and how should we wonder to see men spending their strength and life, in pursuit of despicable vanities; and in the mean time neglecting an exalted Saviour, in whom there is every thing that can make us great and good, joyful and happy? Where can we find so suitable an object for a Christian to place his affections upon as our Immanuel, raised above the earth, and crowned with glory and honour in heaven? It should be so far from damping our love, that it should inflame it the more towards him; that he is taken up out of our sight, as too great and too good to remain on earth. Have we not the same reason as others before us had, though we have not seen him, yet to love him (a); and though now we see him not, yet believing, to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? O then let the Christian's affections be set above, where his Saviour is (b)!

With what life and vigour may we send up our prayers to the throne of grace, seeing our Saviour is gone thither, to present them with much incense? When he left the earth, he did not quit his office, he is yet a Minister of the heavenly sanctuary (c); when he was upon leaving the earth he said, *I go to the Father, and whatever you ask in my name, I will do it* (d); and for the confirmation and encouragement of our faith, he repeated it again, *If you ask any thing in my name, I will do it*. Surely we forget where Christ is, and what he is doing, when we are backward to prayer, or flat and cold in it. Is Christ ascended to give such gifts to men, even to the rebellious, and has he shewed such a willingness and resolution to do it; and yet have we no hearts to ask, nor hands to receive them, no eyes to look up to him, nor resolution to wait for him? Christ's love and readiness to help us never fail, and shall our faith and prayers fail? Shall our spirits sink and flag,

(a) 1 Pet. i. 2.

(b) Col. iii. 2.

(c) Heb. viii 1, 2.

(d) John xiv. 12,—14.

when Christ is ascended so high to serve us? He is not above the reach of prayer (*a*), nor above the impressions of pity; though he is passed into the heavens, yet he is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities: what comfort and encouragement in prayer may this consideration give the Christian? Though Christ is taken up out of our sight, we are not out of his: though we may not be duly affected with his glory, yet he is deeply affected with our infirmities, and is as much disposed as ever to hear and help us.

Christ's ascension may also raise our joy and thankfulness. He is gone up with a shout; let us sing praises to God; let us sing praises to our King (*b*): Though the procession is at an end, yet the praises are not, nor ever shall be; the object and grounds of them are the same, as when Christ first ascended; and therefore why should not our rejoicing be the same? After Christ's ascension (*c*), the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually blessing and praising God: when Christ told them before-hand of his departure, sorrow filled their hearts; but now they had seen the glory of it, and felt the power of his blessing, and his promise of the spirit upon their hearts, their sorrow was turned into joy, as Christ foretold it should be (*d*). Should not the members rejoice in the exaltation of their Head? Love to Christ will cause the Christian to rejoice in his going to the Father, because the Father is greater than he; that is, than Christ, in that nature, in which he went to him, namely, the human nature, which was greatly advanced and honoured by the ascension (*e*): this thought should cause all who love Christ, greatly to rejoice.

(*a*) Heb. xiv. 15. (*b*) Psal. xlvii. 6. (*c*) Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

(*d*) John xvi. 20.

(*e*) Ἐπειτα ἐπὶ ἅπαντας αἱ ἀρεταὶ, κατὰ τὴν ἐπιουσίαν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὁ Χριστός, καὶ ὁ Θεός, ἢ καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος; πάντως καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Θεός ἀεὶ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἦν, καὶ ἀχώριστος τῷ πατρὶ κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρωπίνον ἐν λέγεται, μὴ ἔστιν αὐτῷ εἶναι ὁ πατήρ. The Heretics may then say, How did

3. Is Christ ascended? then how *dangerous* is it for sinners to disobey and degrade him? May it not prick them at the heart, as it did some formerly (*a*), to think, how ill they have used him, whom God hath made both Lord and Christ? If it doth not strike them with conviction, in this world, it will fill them with confusion, in the world to come. How can sinners justify the contempt and reproach they cast upon Christ, when God has raised him, not only from the dead, but also to a heavenly throne? The Jews had a fairer pretence to slight Christ, when he was brought down to the dust of death, than any can now have, seeing he is ascended up on high, and has led captivity captive. Christ's enemies will find it hard to kick against the pricks (*b*). He who sits on the holy hill of Sion is too high, and too great, for sinners to contend with; when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him (*c*).

4. From Christ's ascension we should learn to *value* and *improve* the gospel and a gospel ministry. Those are the ascension-gifts of Christ (*d*), the fruits of the exalted Saviour, designed for the good of even the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them (*e*); but he will wound the heads of such as still go on in their trespasses. The Holy Spirit is grieved and withdraws himself when the gifts and labours of ministers are treated with contempt; they are by many looked upon as trifles, and placed but as cyphers in their account; but God values them at a great sum, as the fruits of Christ's deep abasement, and glorious ascension; and therefore, though many make a little account of them, they will have a great and a sad account to give for

Christ go to the Father; as God, or as man? altogether as man; for, as God, he always was in heaven, and inseparable from the Father: and therefore it is in respect of his humanity, that the Father is said to be *greater* than him. Theophylac. in Joan xiv. 28.

(*a*) Acts ii. 37.

(*b*) Acts ix. 5.

(*c*) Psal. ii. 6—12

(*d*) Eph. iv. 10,—12.

(*e*) Psal. lxxviii. 18, 21.

them. We should see that we refuse not him that speaks from heaven, for then there will be no escaping (*a*).

5. Is Christ ascended? then how highly is our nature dignified and honoured? Adam had rendered it more vile than the beasts that perish; but Christ has raised it above the highest angels: After the fall it was thought to be unworthy of the earthly Paradise; but in Christ it is exalted at God's right hand, and fills the highest and most honourable seat, next his throne. Sin had made human nature the derision of devils, but Christ has made it the delight of angels (*b*), and the joy and glory of the redeemed for ever. The union of our nature to Christ's divine person, gives it a glory infinitely above all conception: the continuance of that union is such an honour done to it, as is far above our highest admiration; and should make us cry out, *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him!*

6. Is Christ ascended in our nature? how much should we honour his person, and advance his interest in the world? Has Christ done so much for our honour and happiness, and shall we do nothing for him? Has he dignified our nature, and shall we debase him? Has he spent one life in labour and sorrows for us, on earth, and is gone up to employ another life for us, in heaven, and shall we not live to him?—What! shall we do nothing for one who has done, and is doing, so much for us? Is it not amazing that Christians should be so unwilling to labour, or suffer for Christ, who did both so freely for them? Who having shed his blood for them on earth, entered into the holy place, with it having obtained eternal redemption for them (*c*)? What un-

(*a*) Heb. xii. 25.

(*b*) Καὶ πῶς ἡμεῖς οἱ τῆς γῆς ἀνάξιοι φανέντες, σήμερον εἰς τὸν ἔρανον ἀνέχθημεν, καὶ ἡ ἡμετέρα φύσις, ἡ καὶ τοῦ παραδείσου ἀνάξια, τὸ πρότερον νομισθεῖσα; αὕτη γὰρ τῷ οὐρανοῦ τὴν προεδρείαν ἀνέληψε, καὶ ἡ τῶν δαιμονίων γενομένη παίγιον, σήμερον ὑπὸ ἀγγέλων, καὶ τῶν ἑνω δυνάμεων προσκυνεῖται.
—Chrysost de ascensione, p. 378.

(*c*) Heb. ix. 12.

grateful disingenuous creatures then must we be, if we think we can ever do too much, bear too much, or part with too much, to honour or promote his interest in the world?

7. From Christ's ascension we may learn the *security* of his interest in this world, and of every believer's salvation in that to come. The church can never sink so long as her head is not only above water, but above the skies, sufficiently qualified with wisdom, love, and power, to support his interest in the world. The Spirit and grace derived from the ascended Saviour, shall preserve the church's inward spiritual life, and his providence provides for her outward defence and safety. The believer having such a friend in heaven needs not to fear any foes on earth, or fiends of hell. The gates of hell shall never prevail against the church; it is Christ's trust, and it is in his power to give eternal life to as many as were given him (*a*).

8. Is Christ ascended? then how *willingly* may the believer leave this world, and follow his Saviour to heaven?—Whilst we are present in the body (*b*), we are absent from the Lord: how confident and willing then may the sincere Christian be, rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord? Heaven has a new attractive in it now, the man Christ Jesus is there in all his glory. Christ's ministry, in the heavenly temple, is infinitely preferable to the ministry and ordinances of the church on earth. The believer is an infinite gainer by exchanging the sight of Christ, through a glass darkly, for a sight of him, as he is, and face to face. Christ thought our sight of his heavenly glory worth his praying for, and the Christian should think it worth the dying for. We have been attempting to get a glimpse of this glory, through the glass of the gospel, and that is refreshing: But, O what is it, to behold it with open face! when there shall be no veil, either upon the eye, or upon the object; to see the glory of the Deity shining

(*a*) John xvii. 2.

(*b*) 2 Cor. v. 6. 8.

through the man Christ Jesus must be most desirable. How then can the Christian refrain from earnestly longing to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better? Did the queen of Sheba come from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and shall not the believer be willing to go from earth to heaven, to see the glory of Christ? Has he paved the way, and prepared the place, by his own ascension, and shall we be unwilling to follow him? Is he in heaven to receive the dear purchase of his blood, and conduct us into the King's palace, and shall we be afraid to trust our souls in his hands (*a*)? Do we not know that he is able to keep them, and present them in glory with exceeding joy? Stephen resigned his soul freely when he had seen Jesus at God's right hand (*b*); then he could say, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*: he well knew that it would be safe in his hands, and that the rage of his enemies could not hurt it there. May the Lord enable us to make these good improvements of this comfortable truth, that Christ has ascended far above all heavens to fill all things.

(*a*) 2 Tim. i. 12.—Jude 24.

(*b*) Acts vii. 56. 59.

OF
CHRIST'S SITTING
AT THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD.
IN
TWO SERMONS.

SERMON I.

Preached NOVEMBER 7, 1727.

Jesus endured the cross, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.—HEB. xii. 2.

HAVING formerly explained, and applied Christ's glorious *ascension*, I come now to consider what immediately followed upon his sitting down at the right hand of God. This is proposed by the author of this epistle, for the support and encouragement of suffering Christians. Christ's cross was the way to the crown; his trials ended in a triumph, his toils on earth in a glorious rest in heaven. What needs explication in the words, will be attempted in handling the following doctrinal proposition:

Christ having endured the cross sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

In speaking on this point, I shall attempt the following things.

- I. I shall explain what is *meant* by Christ's sitting on the right hand of the throne of God.
- II. I shall produce some *evidences* of it.
- III. I shall inquire in what *relation* and *capacity* Christ sits there.

IV. I shall consider the *time* and *ends* of Christ's sitting on God's right hand. And,

V. By way of conclusion, I shall shew what *improvement* is to be made of these things.

Before I enter upon these heads, I would beg leave to hint, that we ought not to be wise above what is written, or boldly intrude into things which we have not seen. Many curious questions may be started upon this head, to which no regard is to be had : we ought to rest satisfied in what the Scripture reveals concerning it, as sufficient for us to know in our present state. So much is revealed, as may raise high and honourable thoughts of Christ : and for this end, let us consider the truth before us, in the method proposed.

I. I shall explain what is *meant* by Christ's sitting on the right hand of the throne of God. By *God's throne*, and by his *right hand*, we are not to understand things material ; God has not bodily parts, as man has, nor does he sit upon a material throne, as princes do. It was the stupid error of some ancient heretics, that God hath a fleshly body with such members as ours have ; but we know that *God is a Spirit*, and a *spirit has not flesh and bones*. God is said to have *wings* (*a*), as well as *hands* : and if the expression were to be taken literally, we must suppose him to have the body of some flying creature ; which shews that the terms are figurative. In condescension to our weakness, God is pleased to speak of himself after the manner of men. As the word *hand* is often used to signify, either intimacy, honour, or power ; therefore God is pleased to express his power, intimacy, and the honour he confers on his Son, by his being on his right hand : And a throne is the seat of sovereign power, majesty, and glory. When Christ is said

(a) Psal. xvii. 8.

to be *on the right hand of the throne of God*, it signifies, that he has sovereign power, majesty, dominion, and glory. In my text, Christ is said to be *on the right hand of God's throne*: elsewhere he is spoken of (*a*), as *sitting down on the Father's throne*, and being in the *midst of the throne*.—Christ being in his *Father's throne*, signifies his participation with the Father in power and glory; and his being on the *right hand of the throne*, may denote the honour which the Father has done Christ, as Mediator, and his nearness to and intimacy with him. Viewing the expressions in this light, there will be no shadow of an inconsistency between them. The Psalmist (*b*), in one place, has spoken of *Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand*; and a little after (*c*), he has spoken of the *Father* as being at *Christ's right hand*: both indeed could not be true, if the expressions were to be taken literally, or locally; but being understood of the dignity and power which Christ has with the Father; and of the aid and assistance which the Father gives to the Son, and of his intimacy with him, there is a very good agreement between the seemingly opposite expressions.

Having offered these general observations, it may be necessary,

1st, More particularly to shew, what is not included and implied, in Christ's sitting on the right hand of the throne of God; which will prepare my way to shew what is included in it.

(1.) It does not imply, that Christ is *exalted* above the Father. In these parts of the world, to place a person at the right hand, is to give him the upper hand, or to place him above one's self: But when all things are said to be put *under Christ*, it is manifest that *he is exalted* who put all things under him (*d*). The Son is to be honoured as the

(a) Rev. iii. 21.—v. 6.—vii. 17.

(b) Psal. cx. 1.

(c) Psal. xc. 5.

(d) 1 Cor. xv. 27

Father (*a*), but not *above* him; he is said to be *equal* with God (*b*), but not *superior* to him.

(2.) It does not imply, that the *human nature* in Christ is *equal* with God. The most dignified creature cannot be equal with God, in perfection or glory; there must be a vast difference between a goodness and greatness, which are infinite and eternal, and such as are limited, and begin in time. Christ's humanity, in its most exalted condition, must be infinitely below Deity; for God has said, *I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like me* (*c*). To suppose Christ's humanity to be immense, almighty, and all-sufficient, would be not to exalt its nature, but to destroy it. It would be to suppose it to be God, and not a creature.

(3.) Christ's sitting at God's right hand does not imply, that his body is *immoveably fixed* in a certain place. The heavens indeed must receive it, till the time of the *restitution of all things* (*d*); but in what posture, or particular place Christ's body is, is not for us to say: however, this we may say, that though Christ's humanity may change place, yet it changes not its state. The union of Christ's humanity with his divinity, and the glory resulting thence, appears, wherever his body is; and as the deity is every where present, it never can remove from it, and especially seeing in *Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* (*e*).

(4.) Christ's sitting at God's right hand, does not signify, that he is *degraded* by the Father. Some have contended, that the *left hand* is, in the eastern parts, deemed the more honourable place; and therefore, that Christ's sitting at the right hand, must denote a lower degree of honour: but it is the constant language of scripture, that God hath highly exalted Christ; he has *given him a*

(*a*) John v. 22.

(*b*) Phil. ii. 6.

(*c*) Isa. xlv. 5.

(*d*) Acts iii. 21.

(*e*) Col. ii. 9.

name above every name : the placing the sheep on Christ's right hand (*a*), and the goats on the left, in the great day, sufficiently confutes the opinion, that the left hand was, in the scripture times, the place of the greater honour. When the church is spoken of, as *standing at the King's right hand* (*b*), it is so represented not to degrade, but to honour her : For the same reason, Solomon is said to have *placed his mother on the right hand of his throne* (*c*). From all which it appears, that, from ancient times, the right hand has been thought the most honourable place. I will only add here, it is not in the least probable, that when the Father will have all men to honour the Son, even as himself (*d*), he himself should degrade him, or set him in a less honourable place. Having thus hinted some things that are not implied in Christ's sitting at God's right hand ; I come,

2dly, To shew, what *things are* implied or included in Christ's sitting on the right hand of the throne of God.

(1.) It denotes the great *dignity* of Christ, in his exalted state : his divine nature was not capable of any real advancement, he being, essentially, *over all, God blessed for ever* (*e*). With respect to that nature therefore, Christ's exaltation can only signify the manifestation of his essential dignity and glory. The veil of his humiliation being taken off, he shined forth in all the brightness of his glory, as God, when he sat down upon his heavenly throne : but with respect to his manhood and office, as Mediator, he was really dignified and exalted, when he sat down at the Father's right hand. It was a great honour to the man Christ Jesus, to be admitted so near to God ; and for the Mediator and high Priest, to be placed upon such a glorious throne : his humanity appears there, filled with all the excellencies where-

(a) See Dr. Owen's Expos. Heb. i. 8.—Rivet on Psal. cx. 1.

(b) Psal. xlv. 9, (c) 1 Kings ii. 19. (d) John v. 22.

(e) Rom. ix. 5.

of it is capable, and in all the splendour which a finite being can enjoy. As Aaron (*a*), the type, so Christ, the antitype, put on his garments of glory, when he went into the holy place, or when he sat down on the right hand of God. The praises and adorations of the heavenly assembly were a new honour done to Christ, upon his ascending his glorious throne. That nature, which had been the object of so much scorn and contempt on earth, is highly admired in heaven, and occasions new songs of praise to God; for they sing not only the song of Moses, but of the Lamb: they are represented saying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing* (*b*). If this should be supposed to refer to the church militant, yet we must allow, that the church triumphant has greater reason, inclination, and ability, to do it; and therefore it is not to be supposed, that the saints above neglect giving those honours to Christ, which are paid to him by his saints here below. It is a high and honourable work, which Christ is engaged in there, to dispense the Spirit, govern the world, intercede for the saints on earth, and for ever feast the joyful eyes of those in heaven, who behold his glory; this must be another part of that dignity and honour to which Christ was raised, when he sat down at God's right hand.

(2.) It denotes the *joy* and *satisfaction* which Christ has in his heavenly state; *At thy right hand*, said he to the Father, *there are pleasures for evermore* (*c*). He was a *man of sorrows* on earth, but he is full of joy in heaven: He that *wipes away all tears from the eyes of his people* (*d*), surely has none in his own. There was a *joy set before him* (*e*), before he suffered; and doubtless it was given him, when he sat down at God's right hand. We may take the

(*a*) Exod. xxvii. 2.—Lev. xvi. 4.

(*b*) Rev. v. 12.

(*c*) Psal. xvi. 11.

(*d*) Rev. vii. 17.

(*e*) Heb. xii. 2.

latter to be an actual donation of the former; the joy he had in prospect when he suffered, he had in possession when he came to his throne. This is the time of his receiving the Father's public approbation, and the tokens of his love, before the whole heavenly assembly; which must be matter of great joy to him who so much valued and delighted in his Father's love.

(3.) Christ's sitting at God's right hand, signifies his *dominion* and *power* over all creatures. When God set him at his own right hand, in heavenly places, it was far above all principality (*a*) and power, might and dominion, in both worlds. 'Can any words, saith Chrysostom (*b*), declare this? He that was of the earth, see how he is exalted; the greatness of his power is truly super-eminent: See whither he has raised him; he has made him higher than any creature in heaven, above all principality and power. We truly need the Spirit, and a mind filled with wisdom in the knowledge of him. Think how great a distance there is between the nature of God and the nature of man; and yet from our meanness and abasement, he has raised it to that honour, not to the first, second, or third degree, but above all: All created power is made subject to the man, on the account of God, the Word, who dwells therein.'

(4.) Christ's sitting at God's right hand, implies his *nearness* to, and *intimacy* with the Father. The prophet

(a) Eph. i. 20, 21.

(b) "Αρα τίς λόγος ὅτος παραστήσαι δυνήσεται τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, τὸν τῶν δαιμόνων παίγιον γενόμενον, εἰς ὅψος ἐυδίας ἀνήγαγεν ὄντως ὑπερβαλλόν μεγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτῆς, καὶ διὰ τοῦ ἀνήγαγεν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις πάσης κτίσεως φύσεως ἀνεώτερον ἐποίησεν, ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας ὄντως πνεύματος χρεῖα, διανοίας τε σοφῆς ἐν τῇ ἐπιγνώσει αὐτῆς ἐννόησον ὅσον ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου καὶ Θεοῦ φύσεως τὸ μέσον ἀπὸ ταύτης τῆς ἐπιτελείας εἰς ἐκεῖνον αὐτοῦ ἀνήγαγε τὴν τιμὴν οὐκ ἵνα βαθμὸν ὑπερέῃ καὶ δεύτερον καὶ τρίτον βαθμὸν — Ἀνθρώπου γέγονε δέλη, πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις δύναμις διὰ τὸν ἐνοικοῦντα Θεὸν λόγον. Chrysost. in loc.

Daniel, in his vision concerning Christ's ascension, and sitting at God's right hand, has told us (a), that he saw one like the Son of Man, who came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him ; which may denote his intimacy with the Father : He received him with the greatest friendship and familiarity, saying, *Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool* (b). Which words seem to carry in them the Father's congratulating the Son, upon his accomplishment of his difficult work on earth. As if he had said, ' I was pleased with thy entrance on this work, and much more with the finishing of it. I love thee for laying down thy life for my chosen ; and it is highly pleasing to me, that thou hast overcome sin, Satan, death, and hell. Be- hold all the joy, rest, and glory in heaven, and universal dominion over the world, are thine ; thou shalt sit on my right hand, and possess all the honour and power foretold and promised thee : I place thee far above the whole creation, next to myself, on the throne ; and thou shalt be my eternal delight, as from eternity I took pleasure in the foresight of this happy hour.' Christ's intercession, of which he gave us a specimen a little before he died, shews what intimate converse he has with the Father, in his present state : this will appear by a careful perusal of Christ's famous prayer (c), before he suffered ; wherein he addressed the Father, as one who was indeed in his bosom, and knew his heart, and had liberty to speak his mind to him. He who had dwelt in his bosom from eternity, must not be thought to be estranged from him, when he sat down at his right hand. The Psalmist joined together his being made *most blessed for ever* (d), and being made *exceeding glad with his Father's countenance*. With what pleasure did the Father look upon the Son, when he received him to sit at

(a) Dan. vii. 13.

(b) Psal. cx. 1.

(c) John xvii.

(d) Psal. xxi. 9.

his right hand ! This was a wonderful evidence how much he was in God's favour, above all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints, or angels ; *To which of the angels said God, at any time, Sit thou at my right hand (a) ?* Though they always behold the face of God, yet they are not admitted into such intimate converse with him, as he who sits at his right hand. It is said, that he *appears in the presence of God for us (b)*, or before his face, in his immediate presence : As he is our advocate he has the Father's ear, eye, and heart ; for he who always heard him on earth will not turn a deaf ear to him, now he has admitted him so near himself in heaven.

(5) Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand, signifies his *administration* of his mediatorial kingdom. By dispensation the Father has *committed all judgment to the Son (c)* ; and, in that sense, *the Father judges no man*. Christ, as God-man mediator, acting œconomically, or according to the order agreed upon, has the administration both of the kingdom of grace and of providence put into his hands ; and is said to sit next to the Father, though in nature equal with him, and to receive power, and authority from him. As it is the Father's province to appoint, and the Son's to execute, the Son acts in the Father's name, as the Spirit acts in the Son's name. Christ sits at the Father's right hand, not absolutely as God, nor absolutely as man, but as God-man mediator ; and therefore is in a station proper for it : He sits next to the Father, because above all mere creatures, in the dignity of his person ; and yet below the Father, though in nature equal with him, on the account of his office, which he has voluntarily undertaken. The not truly considering these things has bred confusion in the thoughts of many, and at length run them, into a denial of Christ's deity. The power and glory signified by Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand, cannot

(a) Heb. i. 13.

(b) Heb. ix. 24.

(c) John v. 19.

be intended of that power and glory, which he has as God, for then the Holy Ghost might be said to sit there, as well as the Son, he having the same divine perfections; but the power and glory denoted by the expressions, being dispensatory, and belonging to Christ's office, as God-man mediator, it belongs to the Son of God, and to him only, seeing he is the one and only *Mediator between God and men (a)*. The Holy Ghost not being in this office, cannot have the mediatory power and glory, or properly be said to sit at the right hand of the throne of God. Christ is a priest and a King upon the throne, and he has a glory which belongs to him, as *building the temple of the Lord (b)*; not only the glory which is in, or results from the work itself, but also a glory and honour which he is crowned with for doing it. Some indeed will not allow this; but, I think, Christ himself asserts, or at least supposes it in those words, *I have glorified thee on earth; now therefore glorify thou me (c)*. In which words Christ makes his performance of the work of a Mediator on earth, the ground of his mediatory glory in heaven: So the prophet Zechariah, in the text before referred to, said, *He shall build the temple, and he shall bear the glory*: there is a connexion between the one and the other; because he *poured out his soul to death*, therefore the Father said he would *divide him a portion with the great*, and that Christ should *divide the spoil with the strong (d)*. The apostle Paul has expressly told us *(e)*, that as a high priest Christ sits on the right hand of the *throne of the Majesty in the heavens*.—From these things it plainly appears, that it is not Christ's essential glory, as God, but his mediatorial power and glory, which are denoted by his sitting at God's right hand.

(6.) Christ sitting at God's right hand denotes the *excellence* of his mediatorial kingdom. The apostle Paul ha-

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 5.

(b) Zech. vi. 12, 13.

(c) John xvii. 4. 5.

(d) Isa. liii. 12.

(e) Heb. viii. 1.

ving introduced Christ (*a*), sitting at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, as high-priest, a little after has told us, that he hath *obtained a more excellent ministry* ; which is first of all, with respect to the person ministering, which is not Moses, or Aaron, or the priests under the law, men that had infirmities and could not continue by reason of death ; but it is God manifested in the flesh, who, though he died once, yet soon revived again, and now lives for evermore ; and in his person is possessed of all human and divine excellencies and perfections. He is Son over his own house ; and is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as he that builds a house has more honour than the house, as the scripture speaks (*b*). His ministry is more excellent, as he is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises : Christ has greater blessings to dispense, and there is a greater certainty of our receiving them, than the legal priests of old either had, or could give. Besides, Christ's administration has more excellency and glory in it, with regard to the place and manner of it : The legal high priest went into a worldly sanctuary ; Christ appears in the heavenly one : the former stood before the typical mercy-seat ; the latter is next to the Father of mercies himself : The legal high-priests had figurative garments of glory ; Christ is clothed with real substantial glory : the former attended God's symbolical presence for a time on earth ; Christ appears before the face, or in the immediate presence of God in heaven : Aaron and his followers had some respect and honour from sinful creatures like themselves ; but Christ is adored and honoured by all the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect : Aaron and his followers ministered the shadow of good things to come ; but Christ gives the substance, the spirit, righteousness, pardon, grace, and eternal life : Moses and the Levitical priests were under a cloud ;

(*a*) Heb. viii. 6.

(*b*) Heb. iii. 3, 4.

but Christ, at the Father's right hand, is in the clearest light and brightest glory : The wisdom, power, and majesty of the ancient prophets and kings had but a very faint resemblance of those glorious qualities in our Mediator. On the account therefore of the excellence of his administration he may be said to sit on the right hand of the throne of God : and this may be more clearly seen, if we take a view of the things signified by his sitting there.

1. The exaltation of his *human nature* in heaven, above all other creatures : they stand and bow before the throne ; Christ sits upon it : he is exalted far above them, and has a *name above every name (a)* ; angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him. But of this I had occasion to speak before, and therefore shall not enlarge upon it here.

2. Christ's sitting there may signify his *safety* and *security* from all attempts of his enemies : When he was on earth, they crucified him ; now he is out of their reach, all their malice and rage is but kicking against the pricks (*b*) ; wounding themselves instead of hurting him. Christ, it may be, had an eye to this, when he had told his enemies, that he was *going to him that sent him*, and that *whither he went they could not come* : which was, as if he had said thus ; ' I shall be secure in my Father's presence ; you cannot come at me there, nor so much as touch my body then.' Wicked men may arrogantly talk of breaking his bands, and may foolishly fancy they can ruin Christ's kingdom ; but they imagine a vain thing : He who sits in the heavens laughs at them ; Christ, upon the holy hill of Sion, has them in derision ; he can dash them in pieces with his iron rod ; but they cannot dethrone him ; he is at the Father's right hand, and shall sit there till all his *foes are made his footstool (c)*. Indeed they are not presently brought under, the work is go-

a) 1 Pet. iii. 22.

(b) See Dr. Owen's expos. Heb. i. 3. p. 70.

(c) Psal. cx. 1.

ing on, though not yet perfected : as the apostle Paul said in his time (*a*), so may we now say, *we see not yet all things put under him* ; but, by faith, we may see him fixed in a glorious station, in which he shall abide till they actually are subjected to him.

3. Christ's sitting at God's right hand may signify his *duration* and *continuance* in this glorious state. He is not like earthly kings, who ascend their thrones, and sit on them a little time, and then lie down in the dust, as well as the meanest of their subjects : our heavenly King lives for ever ; and the Father has said to him, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever* (*b*). The high priests under the law, when they entered into the holy place, soon came out again, they stayed there but a little time ; but Christ continues in the heavenly sanctuary till he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

Having thus endeavoured to shew, what is meant by Christ's sitting at the right hand of the throne of God, I proceed to the next general head ; and therefore,

II. I shall produce some *evidences* of this comfortable truth. If indeed we had no other evidence of it, but the assertion in my text, we ought firmly to believe it ; but seeing God has given us many others in the scriptures, we may, for the exercise of faith, love, and joy, collect and improve them.

1. That Christ actually sits at the right hand of the throne of God, appears from *scripture prophecy*. The Holy Spirit, who spoke in and by the prophets, could not foretell what would never be ; for he is truth, and is no liar ; *he leads into all truth* : but it is impossible that he should delude or deceive us. He has represented Christ saying thus (*c*) ; *Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in*

(*a*) Heb. ii. 8.

(*b*) Heb. i. 8.

(*c*) Psal. xvi. 11.

thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore ; or, thou wilt raise me from the dead, bring me into thy glorious presence, and place me on thy own right hand, where I shall have everlasting joy and pleasure. The Holy Spirit, by David's pen (*a*), has represented the Father saying to the Son, *Sit thou on my right hand* : When this was spoken, is not declared ; possibly it might be in the eternal transactions between the Father and the Son, when the whole platform of salvation was agreed upon, when the purpose was declared, and the grace was given in Christ Jesus (*b*) ; If it was so, the eternal Spirit well knew there was a joy set before Christ, and a obligation which made it necessary that Christ, when he had suffered (*c*), should enter into his glory. Christ mentioned it before his ascension ; and therefore proved it from the prophetic writings, among which that in the hundred and tenth Psalm has ever been looked upon as very full and clear. Had we but Christ's own exposition of it, which we may justly think he gave the disciples, how might it enlighten our understandings, and cause our hearts, as well as theirs, to burn within us ? Those words, *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool*, seem to be not barely a prophetic declaration, but also a promise ; As if the Father had said, ' Son, ' thou shalt sit at my right hand after thou hast suffered, ' and continue there till all thine enemies are subdued : thou ' art an eternal priest, and shall sit and rule upon thy throne.'

The ancient Jewish doctors generally understood that passage in the hundred and tenth psalm of the Messiah : and if the Jews, in Christ's time, had not so understood it, they might easily have answered Christ, when he put them to silence, by alledging this text, and raising that question upon it (*d*), How David could call his Son his Lord ; for it had been only

(*a*) Psal. cx. 1.

(*b*) 2 Tim. i. 9.

(*c*) Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 32.

(*d*) Math. xxii. 42, 43, &c.

replying, that the Messiah is not there spoken of; but they knew it belonged to him; and the last verse seems to me to be a prophetic promise of Christ's exaltation, and sitting at God's right hand; *He shall drink of the brook in the way, thereof shall he lift up the head (a)*. From all these prophetic representations it appears, that Christ, after his death and sufferings, was to sit at the Father's right hand: Seeing therefore his death and sufferings are past, it follows, either that Christ sits there, or else that the prophetic writings have deceived us; but far be it from us to charge the Spirit of truth with falsehood: we conclude, therefore, that Christ actually sits at the Father's right hand.

2. It appears that he does so from express *scripture assertions*. The evangelist Mark has told us, that when Christ *ascended he sat down on the right hand of God (b)*: Paul said, that God set him at *his own right hand (c)*. Christ himself, after his ascension said to John, and by him to us *(d)*, *I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne*: in which expressions there may be an allusion to what was done by Solomon his type, who sat on the throne with David his Father in his life time.

3. We have the testimony of that holy man and martyr, *Stephen*, under the influence of the Spirit of God, and going to appear before his judge, who said, he *saw Jesus on the right hand of God (e)*. He could have no selfish ends to serve, by uttering a falsehood; and he might have well expected, that not Christ, but the devil would have taken his Spirit, had he died with a lie in his mouth.

From these things it appears, that when Christ ascended, he sat down on the right hand of God. His enemies have no reason to reproach us for following and believing in a crucified God: he is a risen ascended Saviour; he is not lost, though gone from us; he sits in glory above, and

(a) Psal. cx. 7.

(b) Mark xvi. 19.

(c) Ephes. i. 21.

(d) Rev. iii. 21.

(e) Acts vii. 56.

will come again the second time, without sin, to complete the salvation of his people (*a*). Without spending farther time in the proof of Christ's sitting at God's right hand, I shall leave what remains, in the doctrinal part, to my next discourse, and conclude for this time, with some

APPLICATION.

1. What regard ought to be paid to Christ's *speaking to us from heaven*? When he was on earth we were commanded to *hear him* (*b*); and he had then the same divine perfections to oblige us to it, as now he has; and yet there is an emphasis laid upon his *speaking to us from heaven* (*c*): as he came from heaven, and knew all the mind and will of God; so he now is seated in heaven, in the highest authority and honour, executing all his offices in the most glorious manner. To refuse him whom God has thus authorised, and owned, is a sin of a high aggravation. It struck some of his enemies to the heart when Peter told them (*d*), that *God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ*: though they had crucified him, God had exalted him, and raised him from the grave to a throne. When we neglect any duty or ordinance, which Christ has appointed, or distrust any gospel promise, which he has set before us, we should think what and where Christ is, whom we disregard: is he not one who sits at God's right hand, crowned with glory and honour? and may not this prick us to the heart hereafter, if now we slight his person, his presence, or any of his appointments? Is it not very evident from the station which Christ is now in, that God the Father loves and honours him? And may we not from thence infer, that he will be incensed against such as slight and disregard him? This sin will appear still more black and odious, if we con-

(*a*) Heb. ix. 28.(*b*) Mark ix. 7.(*c*) Heb. xii. 25.(*d*) Acts ii. 36.

sider not only in what dignity and favour Christ now is, but also who he is, and what he is doing for us, in his present glorious state. Is he not our near kinsman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh? Has he not carried up our nature with him into heaven, and raised it to the highest honour and glory, whereof it is capable? and shall we despise and dishonour him who has shewed such regard to us? Surely that would be most ungrateful, and a vile thing, which ought to be abhorred by all Christians. They who trample under foot the Son of God, and put him afresh to an open shame, will be confounded when he shall appear in a glorified human nature to judge them; and they at the same time will have visible evidence of his love to their nature, and of the honour he has put upon it.

If we consider what Christ is now doing in heaven, it will appear reasonable, that we should pay him our highest regards: He doth not sit idle in his glorious seat; he is still saving poor sinners, and carrying on the designs of his mercy both in heaven and on earth. So much is signified to us in those words (*a*); *Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives in heaven to make intercession for them.* Christ sits at God's right hand, to save his people to the uttermost; and if he lives there to save us to the uttermost, should we not live here to serve him to the uttermost? The rest and glory of heaven do not make him neglect our salvation; therefore shall any thing in this world make us neglect his honour and interest? Surely, if we were duly under the influence of these considerations, we should love Christ more, and serve him better, and pay a greater deference to his person, and a more ready obedience to his commands: We should then make it more our study to honour him whom God has so honoured, in placing him at his right hand; when he has not only by

(*a*) Heb. vii. 25.

his works, but also by his word told us (*a*), that he will have every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess to his Son, whom he has so highly exalted ; and what regard then ought we to pay to our enthroned Lord and Saviour ? Let us resolve, by the help of his Spirit and grace, to endeavour to exalt, honour, and serve him more : Let us often, by an eye of faith, look up to him upon his throne, as a most glorious person, God-man, engaged in a most glorious work, even our salvation, honoured by his Father, and adored by all the other inhabitants of heaven ; and let us say to ourselves, and to one another, shall we do nothing to shew our respects to such a Saviour ? Shall we not do more than ever we did ? Alas ! how little has it been ! It can never be too much, never so much as our glorious Lord is worthy of.

2. What encouragement have we to come to the *throne of grace* by prayer ? Seeing Christ is for ever sat down at God's right hand, we may go into the *holiest of all* (*b*), having such a friend and advocate there. This argument is a very good one ; the Holy Ghost has laid it before us for our encouragement (*c*) ; Christ is *touched with a feeling of our infirmities* ; our great high priest Jesus the Son of God, is *passed into the heavens for us* : we may therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. The glory of Christ's throne has not made him insensible of our infirmities, he feels them still ; he pities and will help his poor distressed servants : we should not then be discouraged ; we have a good friend at court ; Christ at the Father's right hand, to pity and plead for us, and to dispense all needful supplies to us : now he sits at God's right hand he is moved with as tender compassion to the meanest of his members, as ever he was on earth. He is not only man, but the Son of God ; therefore prevalent with the Father, and infinitely powerful and able to relieve his people. Our earthly friends often pity us, but

(*a*) Psal. ii. 9, 10, 11.

(*b*) Heb. x. 19, 20.

(*c*) Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

cannot help us ; but Christ is able to save us to the uttermost. He is our great high priest : he did not quit his office when he sat down upon his throne ; he took his seat there on our account, and not only on his own : he passed into the heavens for us, to appear in the presence of God, on our account, and not only on his own ; he is there as an advocate for his people, to present their prayers with much incense. Christians then ought not to be anxiously careful for any thing, but with cheerfulness and freedom they should go to the throne of grace for all needful mercy, whatever their difficulties and wants are.

3. If Christ has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, then let us labour to *enter into his rest*, not by aspiring to an equal dignity or power with him, for that were wicked to desire, but by believing that he is there, and by making a right improvement of this comfortable truth. It is the work of faith to look within the veil, and to converse with Christ there, now freed from all the labours, sorrows, and sufferings which he endured here below, resting from all works of that kind, and crowned with glory and honour.— With what inward rest, joy, and satisfaction may such a sight of Christ fill a believer ! How may it animate and encourage us more in our Christian race and warfare ! For which end it is proposed to us to *look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame ; and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God (a)*. A view of Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, as head of the church, and Saviour of the body, would be an excellent means to expel our guilty fears. God, who was manifested in our flesh, is *gone up with a shout ; let us then sing praises to God our King (b)* : Let us behold him on his heavenly throne, above temptation and death, and in the

(a) Heb. xii. 2, &c.

(b) Psal. lxxvii. 5, 6.

highest favour with his Father. Shall not the *tongue of the dumb sing for joy* (a), to see the Saviour accepted of God, and exalted to be Sovereign over men and devils, sitting in a royal seat, and making all his foes his footstool? What guilt can stand before that blood (b) which delivered him who shed it from the jaws of death, and raised him to his glorious throne, where he will draw all his people after him?

4. What reason have we to believe, that the *gates of hell* shall not *prevail against the church*? Is not Christ placed in the highest dignity and authority at God's right hand, far above all principality and power? How doth he there deride all the policy and power of his enemies? It is settled, by a firm agreement between Him and his Father, the highest powers in heaven and earth, before whom all creatures are as nothing, that *Christ shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet* (c); that he shall *sit at God's right hand* till he makes *his foes his footstool*. Let us then commit our souls, our friends, his whole church and interest, into his hands, by faith, persuaded that he is *able to keep what we commit to his trust* (d). As he was never conquered, he never can be: the lower he was depressed, the higher he rose; from the cross and the grave he mounted up to the throne, and *sat down on the right hand of God*.

(a) Isa. xxxv. 5.

(b) Heb. ix. 12.—John xii. 32.

(c) 1 Cor. xv, 25.—Psal. cx. x.

(d) 2 Tim. i. 12

SERMON II.

Preached NOVEMBER 21, 1727.

Jesus endured the cross, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.—HEB. xii. 2.

HAVING formerly explained Christ's sitting at God's right hand, and proved the reality and certainty of it, I now proceed ; and therefore,

III. I shall shew in what *relation*, or *capacity*, Christ sits at God's right hand. We must regulate our conceptions of this by Scripture, where we find many characters applied to Christ in his ascended state, or belonging to it, which teach us in what relation, or capacity, he resides there. I think we may very well conclude, that he sits there in the same relation, or capacity, in which he went thither ; and he himself has declared, that he ascended to his Father and his God (*a*). The first person in the sacred Trinity is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (*b*) ; and he is so with respect to Christ's mission and office. Of this the Psalmist, in the name of the Father, has spoken thus, *He shall cry to me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth* (*c*). Which Christ himself thus explained : *Say you of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God* (*d*) ? God is Christ's Father, as he sanctified and sent him into the world : when Christ said he was to *ascend to his Father and his God* (*e*), he spoke of the *dispensation*, as Chry-

(*a*) John xx. 17. (*b*) 2 Cor. xi. 31. (*c*) Psal. lxxxix. 26, 27.

(*d*) John x. 36. (*e*) John x. 17. ubi vid. Chrysostom.

sostom says. To *ascend* belongs to the flesh ; but he spoke that concerning it which they did not imagine. Is God any otherwise our God, than the God of our flesh ? Yes, truly ; for, if in a different way he is the God of the righteous and of the wicked, with much greater difference is he the God of his people, and the God of his Son : he was to sit upon the throne, they to stand before it ; and his glory is far greater than theirs is. We may then look on Christ as sitting at the Father's right hand, in a covenant relation to him, as his Father, and his God, by office ; of which great use may be made, both in defence of the Christian faith, and to increase the Christian's comfort. Christ's calling God *his* God, does not argue that he is, as God, inferior to the Father ; but only that, by covenant and office, he has taken the Father to be his God, whose works he performed, and whose reward he receives. When we see Christ sitting at the Father's right hand, as his covenant God, we may justly infer, that the covenant shall be fulfilled. The blessings promised to Christ, are the sure mercies of David ; for God spoke thus : *I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David : Behold, I have given him to be a witness to the people, a commander and leader of the people (a).*

Christ sits in heaven in a special relation to his people.—He sat down at the right hand of God not only as his Father, but also as our Father ; for as Christ and his people are one in covenant, so God is our God and Father, as well as his God and Father. Hence the redeemed are said now to sit together in Christ, in heavenly places ; for the Father *has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus (b).* The head sitting, the body sits with him ; therefore, to use the words of Chrysostom, ‘ O think where Christ sits, above all principality and power ! And we sit with him ; we, who were dead,

(a) Isa. lv. 3. 4.

(b) Eph. ii. 6.

‘ and the children of wrath by nature, who have done nothing right. O the depth of the riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God ; for, by grace we are saved (a) !’

Another of Christ’s relative characters, as he sits at God’s right hand, is *Mediator* and *Minister* of the heavenly sanctuary. Thus He is several times spoken of in scripture, since his ascension ; *There is one God, and one Mediator, between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (b). He is the Mediator of a better covenant.* Not he was, but he now is. Since he is gone up to his throne, he interposes at present, as a medium of communion between God and his people ; they *come to God by him*, and are *made accepted in the Beloved (c)*. Christ is a minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and that as sitting at God’s right hand (d) : ‘ In the height of his heavenly glory, he condescends to discharge the office of a public minister for the church,’ as one has expressed it (e) ; ‘ and in the discharge of that ministry, he executes all his offices of prophet, priest, and king.’

The testimony of Jesus, or that revelation of the will of God which he gives from heaven, is the Spirit of prophecy : and as he externally reveals the truth, so he internally enlightens the minds of men ; upon this depends the continuance of the church in the world. Were it not for the emanations of light from the Sun of Righteousness, the church would be as dark a dungeon as the world. It was since Christ sat down at God’s right hand, that we were told, that *no man hath seen God at any time, but that the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath*

(a) Κεφαλῆς καθιζομένου, καὶ τὸ σῶμα συγκάθηται διὰ τῆτο ἰσχύου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.—Ἐπάνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας· καὶ πᾶσι συγκάθηται ἐκείνῳ τὸς ἐν νικητὸς φύσει τέκνον ἀρχῆς, καὶ τὸ κατὰ θάνατον, ἔδιν.—ὡς βάλος πλῆτος καὶ σωφίας καὶ γνώσεως Θεοῦ, τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστι σεσωσμένοι φησὶν. Chrysost. in loc.

(b) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(c) John xiv. 6.—Eph. i. 6.

(d) Heb. viii. 1, 2.

(e) Dr. Owen in loc.

declared him (a). Were it not for this, all spiritual gifts would cease; we should be altogether estranged from the life of God, through the blindness of our hearts: there would be no exercise of grace, or enjoyment of spiritual comfort. But here lies the church's security and encouragement, that though the under prophets die, yet the great prophet lives for ever; though earthly ministers may err from the truth, yet Christ never can; he is in the bosom of the Father, and knows the Father as intimately and fully, as the Father knows him: with him also is the residue of the Spirit; and to him, as sitting at the Father's right hand, we are to look; as still engaged to teach and instruct us, to explain and to confirm the truth, and to make us feel the sanctifying and comforting power of it.

Christ's intercession is both an exercise and an evidence of his priestly office. It is, and it ought to be, the believer's great comfort, that Christ *ever lives in heaven to make intercession for him (b)*, and that he continues still to present his prayers; which shews that he has an unchangeable priest-hood, and that, as our great High Priest, he passed into the heavens for us. We are to consider this our great High Priest, as being still as merciful and faithful as ever. Notwithstanding his sitting at God's right hand, he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and feels in himself the injuries done to his church here below. It was since he took his place in heaven, that he said, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me (c)?* Since his exaltation to his throne, he is spoken of *(d)*, as the *faithful witness*; and we are told, that if we *believe not*, yet *he abides faithful*, and *cannot deny himself (e)*. Such a merciful and faithful High Priest, at God's right hand, may be a great comfort and joy to his people in this world, amidst all their infirmities and afflictions.

(a) John i. 18.

(b) Heb. vii. 25.

(c) Acts ix. 4.

(d) Rev. i. 5.

(e) 2 Tim. ii. 13.

Christ, as King, sits and reigns upon his holy hill of the heavenly Sion ; the supreme Lord sits as *King for ever (a)* ; he still sways the sceptre of grace and providence. To him therefore we are to look, who can protect us in all our dangers, who can redress all our just grievances, and can be our crown of righteousness in the great day.

Christ is spoken of *(b)*, in his present state, as *the great and chief shepherd of the sheep* : he is great in his person, in his power, in his grace, and in his glory ; but he is the shepherd still, who protects and feeds the flock. It is a pleasant and useful work of faith, often to look upon him, and say, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (c)*. He still *feeds his flock, and carries his lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young (d)*. Therefore his weak, shiftless, and burdened servants, may cast all their care upon him, for he now cares for them *(e)*. Heaven has not put an end to his pastoral care : before he died, he spoke of a work to be done *(f)*, after he was glorified ; which was the bringing the Gentiles into his fold. This he has been doing near seventeen hundred years, and will never leave it till it is finished ; and so pleasing is the work to him, that all who faithfully serve him in it, as under-shepherds, shall, when the chief shepherd appears, receive *a crown of glory that fades not away (g)*.

Christ's sitting at the right hand of God is spoken of, as he is head of the church : he is a head of vital influence to a body of men made up of living members, which derive from him nourishment, and spiritual increase *(h)*. They who worship angels, and make use of them as mediators and intercessors, deny Christ the head of the church, whose work it is, as such, not only to protect, but to plead for the be-

(a) Psal. cxix. 10.

(b) Heb. xiii. 20.—1 Pet. v. 4.

(c) Psal. xxiii. 1.

(d) Isa. xl. 11.

(e) 1 Pet. v. 7.

(f) John x. 16.

(g) 1 Pet. v. 4.

(h) Eph. i. 21, 22.—Col. ii. 19.

dy, and take care for the welfare of all its members. There is a strict union, and a real, though invisible communion, between Christ the head, in heaven, and all his members here below : distance of place does not cut off the communication between them. No persecutor can touch the members on earth, but Christ the head feels it in heaven. Let none then of Christ's poor, oppressed, afflicted, or tempted members say, Christ will not be concerned for me ; what benefit shall I receive from his sitting at the right hand of God ? For as he is seated there, he is the author and finisher of our faith, and to him we are to look, whilst we run the Christian race (*a*), under such burdens as may make us ready to grow weary and faint in our minds. This looking to Christ, at God's right hand, is not limited to certain times and seasons, but is always to be done, by all Christians. As long as we are running our race, we must be looking to Jesus, at God's right hand : A sight of him there composed the martyr Stephen, and enabled him calmly to resign his spirit to his glorious head.

We find in scripture, that Christ was exalted to be a *Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins* (*b*). There is no reason then for any to say, we have no concern in Christ's sitting at God's right hand, unless it be such as will yield him no subjection, and will expect from him no forgiveness. It is a comfortable thought, that Christ, in all his glory, still continues the character and office of a complete Saviour, or one that is *able to save to the uttermost* (*c*). Such as were reconciled to God by his death, shall certainly be saved by his heavenly life (*d*). His advancement then should not discourage us ; if he had laid aside the care, he would also have laid aside the character of a Saviour. It would be a great eclipse of his heavenly glo-

(*a*) Heb. xii, 2, 3.

(*b*) Acts v. 31.

(*c*) Heb. vii. 25.

(*d*) Rom. v. 10.

ry, to be exalted for this very end, to save his people, and yet neglect their salvation, or leave it unaccomplished.

Thus I have considered some of the *titles* and *characters* which Christ sustains, as sitting at God's right hand, which, as they have a special relation to his people, so they may animate and encourage them, to go up out of this wilderness, leaning upon their Beloved.

We may also consider Christ's sitting at God's right hand, as it respects the wicked: Though Christ is not a head to them, yet he is Lord over them; though they are not his *friends*, yet they shall be his *footstool* (a). The day of *vengeance is in his heart*, and he will tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury (b). He sits above, to rule the nations with his iron rod, and to dash them in pieces, as a potter's vessel (c). It would therefore be their wisdom to receive instruction, and to submit to him whom they cannot withstand; for, *if his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him*.

IV. I shall consider the *time* and *ends* of Christ's sitting at God's right hand. I shall speak to these distinctly;

1st, I shall speak a little of the *time*, or how *long* Christ shall sit at God's right hand. That I may handle this the more clearly, I shall cast my thoughts into the following propositions:

1. Christ's sitting at God's right hand *followed* his ascension, and did not go before it. In my text, the apostle spoke of it, as consequent to his *enduring the cross*. It immediately followed his being *received up into heaven* (d): no regard is therefore to be had to their opinion, who hold that Christ sat at God's right hand from the first moment of his assuming our nature.

2. Christ shall sit at God's right hand, till *all his ene-*

(a) Psal. cx. 1.

(b) Isa. lxiii. 3, 4.

(c) Psal. ii. 6, 9, 10, 11, 12.

(d) Mark xvi. 19.

mies be subdued and destroyed, viz. sin and Satan, death and hell. The father said to him, *Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool (a)*. And it is said of him, that *he must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (b)*. He shall then continue in his present station, till the general resurrection; for till then death is not destroyed. I do not say, that Christ shall not continue in it *after* that. Some indeed are of that opinion, induced, as I suppose, by some scripture passages, which I come next to consider.

3. There is a time and sense wherein Christ shall *deliver up the kingdom* to the Father. *When the end cometh, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and be subject to him, that God may be all in all (c)*. But these things need to be explained: by *the kingdom* which Christ shall deliver up, we may understand the present form of his mediatorial kingdom, as it is now administered, by means and instruments, in this world: As for example, by the Word and Spirit, by ministers, ordinances, instruments of grace and providence. Angels and men are employed by Christ, in converting some, and confounding others; he, at the same time, over-ruling all to his own glory. When all of this kind is accomplished, as it will be, at, or after the general judgment; for then cometh the end of this present world, and of Christ's kingdom in it; then he shall deliver up his kingdom to the Father, as having finished all he was to do in time, and to bring about by means and instruments in governing his church, subduing his enemies, and in bringing all the redeemed to glory: And then they who had enjoyed God but very imperfectly, in time, shall have him to be all in all, or enjoy him fully for ever, as fully as their capacities will admit; and then Christ himself shall be subject to the Father; that is, as some say, as man, but so he

(a) Psal. cx. 1. (b) 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. (c) 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

is already ; therefore I think it is rather to be understood of Christ's being subject to the Father, as Mediator.

It may be here objected, in that sense he was always subject to the Father, as he himself said, "*The Father is greater than I.*" (a)." I answer, that though the mediatory office is inferior to the essential sovereignty of the Godhead, yet, as to the exercise of that authority, the Mediator had it in his own hands, as set up by the Father, to govern the church and the world, by means and instruments to the end of time. Christ himself declared, in these words, *The Father judges no man, having committed all judgment to the Son* (b). But when that dispensation is finished, then the Son ceases from this way of rule and government, and in that sense becomes subject to the Father ; his commission for a kingdom and rule on earth expiring, he, as it were, lays it down before the Father, and so becomes subject to him : This, with submission to better judgments, I think to be the meaning of the difficult text I have considered ; but if I should be mistaken in this, yet I suppose I may safely assert,

4. Christ shall for ever *continue* King, Priest, Prophet, and Head of the church triumphant. *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end* (c). It is strange to think, that he should lay aside his rule as soon as he has subdued his enemies ; as if a king should quit his crown as soon it comes to sit easy on his head ; or lay down his government as soon as he has reduced his subjects entirely to his obedience : And it is, at least to me, very shocking, to suppose, that Christ should ever cease to be a head to his church, or that his human nature should ever be degraded from that throne on which it now sits. Are the gifts of God to the saints *without repentance* ; and are they not so to his Son ? It was long since declared, that of the *increase of Christ's government*

(a) John xiv. 28. (b) John v. 22, 23. (c) Luke i. 33.

and peace there should be no end (a) ; and, with respect to his sitting at God's right hand ; that his dominion is an *everlasting dominion*, which shall not pass away ; and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed ; that he shall reign over his people in mount Sion, from henceforth, even for ever, and that his throne is for ever and ever : and shall we think he has an everlasting throne, and yet shall not sit upon it for ever ? Christ prayed that his people might be *with him*, to *behold his mediatorial glory* (b) ; and shall this glory cease as soon as they all come to see it ? What good then would this prayer do them ? How short-lived a happiness would it be to some of them, who should only have a short glimpse of it, after the resurrection, and then behold it no more for ever, whilst others have been in the views of it ever since Christ's ascension. ' It is (as one expresses it (c)) a matter of inexpressible joy to such as love Christ, that he is now exalted, glorified, enthroned in an everlasting immoveable kingdom : ' How then can they bear the thoughts of Christ's being dethroned ?—Surely this can never be ; will Christ the *chief Shepherd* (d), hereafter give to his under shepherds a *crown of glory that fades not away*, and shall his own wither ? Shall he who is chief, have less honour than they who are so much inferior to him ? Shall the subjects wear a crown when the King has none ?

It has been alledged, that Christ's mediatory kingdom being *given* him (e), as a reward of his sufferings, the reward shall *cease* when the work is done ; but that is a punishment, and not a reward : surely the reward is rather to begin than end, when that which procured it is accomplished. Christ did not *leave* but *enter into his glory* when his suffering work was finished ; for otherwise the same thing should be the cause of his being enthroned and dethroned.

(a) Isa. ix. 7.—Dan. vii. 14.—Mich. iv. 7.—Heb. i. 8.

(b) John xvii. 24. (c) Dr. Owen's expos. Heb. i. 8. p. 112.

(d) 1 Pet. v. 4. (e) Dr. Whitby on 1 Cor. xv. 28.

It has been farther urged, that when Christ's work as a *King* is done, his *kingdom* may well be supposed to be at an end (*a*). To which I reply, that, according to that rule, it must continue for ever; for it will be an eternal work for Christ to reward his friends, and punish his foes. Christ, as *King*, lives for ever, and has the keys of death and of hell: When he comes to judgment he will *punish the wicked with everlasting destruction, from his presence*: and he shall be *eternally glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe* (*b*).

The members of Christ shall reign in life for ever; and shall not their head, who procured them this dignity? Shall the servants be above their Lord? How can the saints reign with Christ for ever, if he himself does not reign for ever (*c*)? Some who speak of Christ's laying down his office (*d*), and resigning his kingdom, do yet allow, that he shall sit for ever at God's right hand, highly exalted in dignity, honour, and blessedness; and that the saints shall pay him religious respect and veneration, as their King: And it is observable, that the scriptures say nothing of his being degraded after his being placed at God's right hand; but on the contrary, tell us (*e*), that he is a *Priest for ever, after the power of an endless life*, and that he sat down on the right hand of God for ever and ever, and lives in heaven to make intercession. 'It is not probable, as one says (*f*), 'that the intercession of Christ should totally end, at the 'end of the world; but rather it will continue to all eternity.' In some respects, indeed, there will be no occasion or necessity of Christ's interceding after the last judgment; there will be no need of his interceding for the effectual calling of any of the elect, nor for the pardon of

(*a*) Dr. Whitby on 1 Cor. xv. 28. (*b*) 2 Thes. i. 9, 10.

(*c*) Rom. v. 17.

(*d*) Dr. Whitby ut supra.

(*e*) Psal. cx. 4.—Heb. vii. 16.—x. 12.—vii. 25.

(*f*) Cruso on Christ's interces. p. 564.

sin, nor for their progress in sanctification, nor for the bringing God's sons and daughters to glory : All these things will be then actually done, and fully brought to pass ; but the intercession of Christ will be still needful, for the everlasting continuance of the glorified in their holy and happy state. If the virtue of the blood of Christ could ever be spent, or its voice drowned, throughout eternal ages, what security would the saints have for their abode in heaven ?

The redeemed had always been used to come to God through Christ, and to receive all from God, by and through him ; and to admire him, love him, and cleave to him, as their dignified Lord and head : Surely then it would be very surprizing to them, to have such a turn and change in their condition, that their dear Saviour should continue no longer in that relation or glory, which they had rejoiced in. But that God, who gathers all the things in heaven together in Christ, will doubtless continue him, as an everlasting bond of union, and medium of communion, between himself and the glorified saints. If the elect angels were chosen and confirmed for ever in Christ, as their head, as the scripture seems to intimate (*a*), what reason can there be that those redeemed from among men, should not for ever abide in him ? The whole family in heaven (*b*), and on earth, good angels, and redeemed men, are named of Christ : He is their head, the head of all principalities and powers ; the angels worship him, and are part of the general assembly gathered together in Christ (*c*) ; in him all the members of this family are united, and in him they for ever abide ; he therefore is for ever their Lord and head. Christ is the eternal head of the whole family ; God hath placed one head over all angels and men. Thus there is a strict union and con-

(*a*) Eph. i. 10.

(*b*) Eph. iii. 15.—Col. ii. 10.—Heb. xii. 22.

(*c*) Vide Dr. Owen's meditac. on Christ's glory, p. 24.

junction, all having one heavenly necessary bond of union, as one of the ancient writers has expressed it (*a*).

That what I am now upon may not be thought foreign to my subject, I desire it may be observed, that *Christ's sitting at God's right hand*, and being *head over all things to the church* (*b*), are joined together in scripture; and certainly there is a very close connection between them. It is said of the heavenly Jerusalem, that *the Lamb is the light thereof* (*c*); this may respect that unction from Christ, the holy One, the emanations of light from the Holy Spirit, derived from Christ, the eternal head of the glorified church; and if so, then Christ for ever sits at the Father's right hand, not only as king and priest, but also as prophet; from whom, by his Spirit, light is continually communicated to that blessed assembly.—From what has been said, I hope the truth of the proposition last laid down may appear, that Christ sits for ever at God's right hand as king, priest, and prophet, and head of the church.

The substance of what I have advanced upon this point I take to be the sense of a very learned and judicious writer (*d*), who, speaking of Christ's sitting down for ever, at the right hand of God, says, ‘ it was in an unalterable state ‘ and condition :’ and in another place (*e*), upon a review of what he had said, concerning Christ's delivering up the kingdom to the Father, he has observed, ‘ That the person ‘ of Christ, in and by the human nature, shall be for ever ‘ the immediate head of the whole glorified creation; for ‘ we shall never lose our relation to him, nor he to us. That ‘ he shall be the way and means of communication between ‘ God and the glorified saints for ever; that our adherence

(*a*) Οὕτως ἂν γένοιτο ἀκριβὲς συνάφεια, ὅταν ὑπὸ μίαν ἄπαντα ἀχθεῖται κεφαλήν, συνδισμένῃ τῶν ἀναγκαστῶν ἁωδῶν ἔχοντα. Chrysost. in loc.

(*b*) Eph. i. 20, 22.

(*c*) Rev. xxi. 23.

(*d*) Dr. Owen's expos. Heb. x. 12. p. 47.

(*e*) Owen of Christ's person, fol. p. 188, 189.

‘ to God, by love and delight, shall always be through Christ ; and that the person of Christ, and therein his human nature, shall be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship.’ When this learned writer spoke of *Christ’s human nature*, as being the *object of worship*, I suppose he meant not that it is so, immediately and formally, but only relatively and consequentially, as it is in the person of the Son ; for *God* only is the immediate and proper object of divine worship and adoration. The blessed assembly above will never forget the Lamb, or any of his glorious titles, offices, or works : a review and thankful remembrance of them, will be no small part of the eternal work and happiness of heaven.

I shall conclude this part of my subject relating to the duration of Christ’s sitting at the Father’s right hand, in the words of a very judicious writer (*a*), ‘ Though the present *form* of Christ’s government shall end with the world, yet his government shall not end, but together with, and subordinately to the Father : he shall govern his church triumphant, by the immediate efficacy of his Spirit, without all use of external means.’ In which words I think he has expressed the truth, relating to this matter, very concisely and clearly.

2dly, I come to the last branch of this general head, which is to point out some of the *ends* and *reasons* of Christ’s sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. The dignity of Christ’s person, the Father’s love to him and his work, the accomplishment of the decree and promise, and due performance of Christ’s offices, and the filling up his relative characters, might here be assigned as good reasons of it : But I shall confine myself to one respecting God, another to the church militant, and a third relating to the church triumphant.

1. It was necessary with respect to the *glory of God*, that

(*a*) Mr. Norton’s orth. evang. p. 50.

Christ should sit at his right hand. Christ hinted this in those words : *Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee (a)*. The very appearance of such a glorious Redeemer, at the Father's right hand, must cause the heavenly assembly to admire the wisdom and grace which concurred in the constitution of his person, and in his designation to his office. How much is it to the honour of the divine truth, power, and love, to raise him from the lowest humiliation to the highest glory ?

2. Christ sits there for the *good* of the *church militant* : Christ sitting at God's right hand, rules over a *willing people (b)* ; he employs his power in both worlds, for the collecting and making happy the chosen seed : from that glorious morning, in which he began to shine in his heavenly throne, he had the *dew of his youth*, a numerous conversion of souls to God : A proof of this was Peter's sermon, which was preached when Christ was newly ascended to his throne, and had poured out the Spirit, according to his promise. Before his ascension, he promised to be with his church here below, to *the end of the world (c)* : as Christ rules, so his people live, in the midst of his and their enemies ; but Christ sits upon the throne to curb them, and in the end he will destroy them. After the general resurrection there shall be no enemies left, in a capacity to hurt Christ's people ; and in the mean time his sitting at God's right hand is an evidence, that God is well pleased with man's salvation : This may cause us to believe that *God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself*. Every serious impartial mind will draw this conclusion from Christ the Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God. From Christ, in this station, all gifts and graces are derived, for the edifying the saints, both in grace and holiness ; and thus our enthroned Saviour builds the temple, and bears the glory : He will never leave work-

(a) John xvii. i. (b) Psal. cx. 1, 2, 3. (c) Mat. xxviii. 19.

ing, till the church militant is incorporated with the church triumphant.

3. Christ sits at God's right hand to complete the *joy* and *glory* of the *church triumphant*, or the saints in glory. To the old-testament saints, who had never seen Christ in the flesh, it must be a wonderful joy, to see their incarnate Saviour, crowned with glory and honour, at the Father's right hand. If Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ's incarnation, what was his joy when he saw him ascend the throne of his glory? Such as had seen him a man of sorrows on earth, must be filled with joy unspeakable, to behold him in possession of those pleasures and honours which he has at the Father's right hand for evermore. John the Baptist, the converted thief, the apostles, and others, who saw him debased on earth, must be wonderfully pleased to behold him in his glorious throne, next to God the Father. Those who lived and died since Christ's ascension, and so never saw him in the flesh, till they saw him in glory, must be filled with joy unspeakable by the sight, especially if we consider Christ's part in the temple service above; how entertaining must this be to the blessed beholders on earth! They used, it may be, many prayers and sermons, and other duties and ordinances, to get one glimpse of Christ; but in heaven he dwells amongst them continually, and is never out of their sight. Christ had prayed that they might be *with him* (*a*); and so they shall be for ever before him, to behold his glory (*b*). It must be to them a peculiar pleasure to see what Christ is doing for the Church here below; how he intercedes for them, how he presents their prayers and worship to God, and their souls when they leave their bodies. These things, with many others, of which we are now ignorant, we may suppose to be no small part of the happiness of the saints in heaven. And I would beg leave to add, that Christ's glory, after the day of judge-

(a) John xvii. 24.

(b) Rev. vii. 15.

ment, as sitting at God's right hand, and exercising all his offices, in a glorious manner there, will be the entertainment of all the redeemed, who shall then meet in one glorious assembly, and that the most glorious one that ever was ; and the joy, adoration, and praises of the holy angels will be no small accession to the happiness and glory of heaven. They desired to *look* into the glory foretold by the prophets (*a*) ; with joy they saw God manifest in the flesh, and sung *glory to God in the highest* (*b*), when he first appeared on earth. With what fresh delight then may we suppose they beheld him ascending up on high, and with how much pleasure do they attend his throne (*c*), with the ascriptions of glory and honour to him, as sitting there ! ‘ Heaven itself ‘ (as one speaks *d*) was not what it is, since the entrance ‘ of Christ into the heavenly sanctuary for the administration of his office ; neither the saints departed, nor the angels themselves were participant of that glory which now ‘ they are partakers of.’—It was therefore necessary that Christ should take his glorious seat in heaven, that so he might glorify the Father, take care of the church below, and make the church above happy and joyful in his presence : And at the restitution of all things the blessed angels, and all the redeemed will join in ascribing glory, and honour, and praise, to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb at his right hand, and that for ever and ever. I come now to the

APPLICATION.

1. If Christ sits at the right hand of the throne of God, then the Christian should be willing to be *absent from the body*, and to be *present with the Lord*. When Paul had once been in the third heavens, he ever after desired to be dismissed from this world. *Having*, said he, *a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better* (*e*). Who

(*a*) 1 Pet. i. 12. (*b*) Luke ii. 14. (*c*) Rev. v. 11. 12.

(*d*) Dr. Owen on Christ's person, p. 184. (*e*) Phil. i. 23.

could be a better judge of the desirableness of heaven, and the glory of that place, where Christ is, than one who had been admitted to such knowledge of it, as, I suppose, no mere creature in this mortal state ever had, either before or since.—The believer's affections should now be in heaven, where his Saviour is ; his heart ought to be with his glorious head. Did Jacob, when he heard of all the glory of Joseph in Egypt, say, *I will go down and see him before I die* (a) ; and should not the believer, who has heard of Christ's glory in heaven, say, If the Lord please, I would die, that I may go thither, and see my dear enthroned Redeemer, and live with him for ever ? I am persuaded, that if we had a clear view of Christ's glory there, and of our interest in him, we should need as many arguments to make us willing to live, as some Christians now do to make them willing to die.

2. If Christ sits at God's right hand, then what *reverence* is due, in all our approaches to him, and in our whole conduct and conversation ? Though we are in a low condition, yet we worship one who sits upon a glorious throne, on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; the holy angels cover their faces before him, as sitting upon his glorious throne, high and lifted up. Did the prophet Isaiah cry out, *Woe is me, for I am undone, (or cut off,) because my eyes have seen the King* (b) ? Did the holy apostle, who had once *leaned on his bosom*, afterwards *fall at his feet as dead* (c), when he had a view of his glory ; and shall we draw nigh to him with an irreverent boldness ? Must *Moses put off his shoes* (d) in point of reverence, when he called to him out of the bush ; and shall we indulge a light and unconcerned spirit, when he speaks to us from heaven ; or when we approach him upon his glorious throne ? Is he to be had in reverence by all who attend him in heaven ? and shall we, in a lower station, have no awe upon our spirits, when we

(a) Gen. xlv. 28.

(b) Isa. vi. 1.

(c) Rev. i. 17.

(d) Exod. iii. 5.

have to do with him? Are not all things naked and open to his eyes, though he is at God's right hand; how then will they answer it another day, who profane, or take his name in vain?

3. If Christ is at God's right hand, next to him in dignity, power, and glory, then there is no reason for Christians to be *ashamed of their Master*, or his *service* in this world. It is a greater honour to be a servant of Christ, than to be next in dignity to the greatest prince on earth; for Christ is Lord of lords, and King of kings: Christians serve an honourable Lord, who sits enthroned, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens: but sinners, however they flatter themselves, have reason to be ashamed, both of their master and of his work; they serve an inglorious spirit, who is himself a victim in chains, dreading his final doom and misery. Whilst wicked men, therefore applaud themselves and one another, they do but glory in their shame; and when the Christian either labours, or suffers for Christ, shall he be ashamed of his glory? When we look to Christ sitting at the Father's right hand, how reasonable may the apostle Paul's exhortation appear to be, which is, *Be thou not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner (a)*? Christians should esteem the reproach of Christ, as greater riches than the world can give.

4. How *dangerous* is it for sinners to *oppose* Christ, who is at the right hand of God, possessed of all power in heaven and earth? Is he not able and resolved to make his enemies his footstool? *Every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue must confess him (b)*: Such as refuse his yoke, shall not escape his iron rod. How will they bear to hear him say, *Bring those my enemies that would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me (c)*?

5. How thankful should we be for the honour which Christ has done our nature? When man had made it more

(a) 2 Tim. i. 8.

(b) Phil. ii. 10.

(c) Luke xix. 27.

vile than the beasts that perish, Christ raised it not only above them, but above the angels, even the highest order of them, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers ; to none of these was it ever said by God, *Sit on my right hand* : But our blessed Redeemer did the human nature an infinite honour, first in taking it into union with himself, and then in raising it to a throne of unspeakable glory : He has not only filled it with grace, but which is astonishing, with the *fulness of the Godhead* (a), which dwells in him bodily, and the glory of it shines in his face. Now, *what is man*, that both God the Father, and the Son should be thus *mindful of him* (b) ? Christ did not lay aside our nature, because he was treated with such indignities in it, buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and crucified ; but he still retained his respect to it, and after all this ascended in it, to be crowned with glory and honour, at the right hand of God : This is such a high favour and honour, as we could never have expected, nor have believed, were it not so clearly revealed in scripture. How much should this be in our thoughts, and how frequently should it be the matter of our admiration and thankfulness ?

6. If Christ has sat down at the right of the throne of God, then what *encouragement* and *comfort* may this afford the weak and dejected Christian ? Doth the Saviour find such favour with God ; and will he reject any of his people ? Is Christ in so high a station, exercising all his power and grace for the good of his labouring, afflicted servants, in this world ; and shall not their weak hands be lifted up, and their feeble knees be strengthened ? Do Christ's merits appear infinite, and prevalent, in-as-much as he is *gone to the Father* (c), and we *see him no more* ; and shall not this encourage the feeble Christian to commend his soul to him, and cast all his care upon him, expecting the comfortable issue of it ? Is

(a) Coll. ii. 9.

(b) Psal. viii. 4, 5.

(c) John xvi. 8.

not the Redeemer gone to appear in the presence of God for all his people? Does he bear all their names and cases on his heart, so near to the Father; and shall the believer refuse to be comforted? What reason has the Christian, who is of a *fearful heart, to be strong*? Are all the redeemed raised up with their exalted head, and set together with him in the heavenly places; and shall not our faith and hope be raised up, and fixed upon him? Have we no anchor to enter into what is within the veil? Why should the Christian's heart fail when he has an enthroned Saviour, who cannot fail or be discouraged? Let us the more diligently attend to this, because it is what the apostle Paul has so strenuously urged upon the afflicted believing Hebrews, in the text and context. *Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame: Let us consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds.* And let us take encouragement from this consideration, that he who was brought very low, is now exalted, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God.

THE
INTERCESSION OF CHRIST FOR HIS
PEOPLE.

AT THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

IN
TWO SERMONS.

SERMON I.

Preached FEBRUARY 6, 1727-8.

He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God through him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.—HEB. vii. 25.

HAVING formerly discoursed of Christ's *ascension* and *sitting at God's right hand*, I come now to consider that *great and blessed work* which he is doing there for his people. The loss of Christ's bodily presence from the earth was attended with a double advantage, his *sending the Spirit* to dwell in, sanctify, and comfort his people on earth, and his own *interceding* for them in heaven. The Holy Ghost introduces *Christ's intercession* with a high encomium, in assigning it as a reason and evidence of his being *able to save his people to the uttermost*. It appears that his sacrifice was accepted of God on earth, seeing he admits him to plead the merit of it in heaven; and doing this, in discharge of his office, the Father, according to previous agreement, is obliged to grant those saving blessings, for which he prays: for thus the Father said to him, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the*

heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (a).

The words of my text are introduced as a reason of Christ's being able to save to the uttermost all such as come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them. At first view, it appears from this connexion of the words, how much our perfect and eternal salvation depends upon Christ's perpetual and prevalent intercession. The apostle does not lay the stress of our salvation only upon Christ's *dying for us*, but ascends step by step till he comes at his *intercession*; and centers and rests there, that being what fully secures it. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again (b):* But as if that were not enough, he ascends two steps higher, *who is even at the right hand of God*; and to crown all, he adds, *who also maketh intercession for us*. The doctrine which the words afford is this,

Christ ever lives to make intercession for believers.

In speaking to this, I shall pursue the following method.

I. I shall describe the *persons* for whom Christ intercedes.

II. I shall shew the *reality* and *certainly* of his intercession.

III. I shall consider the *character* of the intercessor.

IV. I shall endeavour to explain the *nature* and *properties* of Christ's intercession.

V. I shall inquire into the *extent* of it, whether it is limited or universal.

VI. I shall represent the *importance* and *prevalence* of it.

VII. I shall mention some of its *fruits* and *effects*. And,

VIII. By way of conclusion, I shall shew some of the *uses* which are to be made of this doctrine.

I. I shall describe the *persons* for whom Christ intercedes: They are such as *come to God by him*.

(a) Psal. ii. 8.

(b) Rom. viii. 33, 34.

The expressions are comprehensive of a great many things, which I cannot now insist on : As for example, that men naturally are at a distance from God ; though as to his essence, he is not far from them, yet as to affection and communion, they are alienated from him, and are afar off, and naturally live without God in the world ; so that if ever they enjoy him, they must first be *made nigh*, and then they will *draw nigh* and *come to God*. Another thing implied in the words is, that God is the true center and rest of the soul ; as all rivers run into the sea, so all happy souls take up their rest in God, as the Psalmist speaks, *Return to thy rest, O my soul (a) !*—The expression also denotes, a sense of the person's unfitness and unworthiness to come to God alone, or immediately, by himself, by reason of guilt, pollution, darkness, and weakness ; and therefore he comes to God by Christ, the one and only Mediator, betwixt God and sinners. There is one thing more included in the expression, which is the person's desire and willingness to come to, and enjoy God, in what way he prescribes and thinks fit. Seeing God has appointed that no man shall come to him but by Christ, those who come to him willingly and gladly take this way, they like it well and make use of it ; the bent and earnest breathings of their souls are to come to God, and they agree to any method which he appoints, in order to their access to him, and enjoyment of him.

I might farther remark, that the words speak not of a single act, but of a series and continued course of actions, [*προσερχόμενοι*] the *comers*, as the word is rendered elsewhere (b) ; I may compare the expression with that of Peter, *To whom coming as to a living stone (c)*. As departing from God is the continued course, and the reiterated action of an unbeliever, so coming to him through Christ, is the repeated daily work of a true Christian. Such therefore are very properly described as coming to God ; persons

(a) Psal. cxvi. 7.

(b) Heb. x. 1.

(c) 1 Pet. ii. 4.

who do it not only once, but often ; it is the employment, the business of their lives.

All these things, with others, are implied and included in the description of the persons, for whom Christ makes intercession. But to sum up the whole, in as narrow a compass as may be, there are these two principal things signified by the apostle's words, true faith in Christ, and in God through him, and the exercise of that faith, in the way of God's own appointment.

1. Faith in Christ is represented as a *coming* to Christ, in these words of his, *He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall never thirst : Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (a)*. Faith is also represented as a coming to God, by Christ, *by whom we have access, by one Spirit to the Father (b)*. This faith in Christ terminates upon his person, has an eye to all his offices, but especially his priestly office : It looks to the sacrifice of atonement which Christ offered, and the interest which he makes in the virtue of it. Such as come to God by Christ, renouncing all trust in their own righteousness, their best duties and services, depend entirely on the merits and righteousness of Christ, for pardon and eternal life, and can wish with the apostle Paul, that they *may be found in him, not having on their own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (c)* ; and being *reconciled to God by the death of his Son (d)*, they trust, that they shall much more be saved by his life.

2. Coming to God often signifies *religious worship* : Thus especially in the old testament is the phrase made use of for that purpose ; accordingly the apostle Paul speaking of the legal sacrifices, said, *That they could not make the*

(a) John vi. 35.—Matt. xi. 28.

(b) Eph. ii. 18.

(c) Phil. iii. 9.

(d) Rom. v. 10.

comers thereto perfect, (*a*) viz. those who in that way came to God. Such as Christ intercedes for, and saves to the uttermost, are those who believing in Christ, give up themselves in holy obedience to worship God in Christ, as one has observed (*b*). Obedience to Christ's authority, affiance in his mediation, and faith in his person, are all included in the expression of coming to God by him; as is very well observed by the same person. We run into a gross mistake, if we think that Christ intercedes for all, who come to the religious worship of God by Christ: The text speaks no such thing; they who really come to God in faith and love, and have acceptance and communion with him, are the persons for whom Christ intercedes, and who are by him saved to the uttermost. A due consideration of this is necessary to our taking comfort in what remains to be spoken concerning Christ's intercession: Our joy may be full, if it appears that the high-priest bears our names on his breast, and that our cause is upon his heart, and in his pleas, as advocate with the Father. As the high-priest of old bore the names of the children of Israel upon his shoulders, and on his breastplate, which was fastened to his glorious ephod; so Christ, our great high-priest, appears before God, in the glorious garment of his own righteousness, and in a glorious conjunction of power and love, bears the names and causes of his people, *as a memorial before the Lord continually* (*c*). This is the happiness of all true believers who come to God by him; for them he intercedes, and them he saves to the uttermost, perfectly and for ever.

Having thus described the persons for whom Christ intercedes, it will be necessary, in the next place, to shew that Christ's intercession is no *fiction* or *fancy*. Therefore,

II. I shall shew the *reality* and *certainity* of Christ's intercession.

(*a*) Heb. x. 1. (*b*) Dr. Owen in Loc. (*c*) Exod. xxviii. 12, 29,
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Christ, as the angel of God's presence, (or one who appeared in the presence of God for them,) saved his people *all the days of old* (a). As Aaron, the high-priest (b), carried the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast-plate and heart, when he went in to intercede for them before the Lord; so Christ, in all ages, has sustained the character of an advocate, as well as of a propitiation. God admitted of the salvation of old-testament saints, by virtue of a sacrifice that should afterwards be offered; and consequently he admitted of a plea, arising from the virtue and merit of that future sacrifice: Christ then could as well be an intercessor, as a propitiation from the foundation of the world.

He is always living to make intercession (c). Before he came in the flesh he was engaged in this work, for thus he is introduced by the prophet Zechariah, the angel said, *How long, O Lord, will it be ere thou hast mercy on Jerusalem?* And the Lord answered the angel with good words and comfortable words (d). The angel here praying is Christ interceding with the Father for his people (e). God the Father answered the Son with good and comfortable words, heard and graciously answered his prayers, and fulfilled his petitions. 'Christ exercised the office of Mediator and Intercessor for his people, making the price to be paid forthcoming in all ages, even before his incarnation; for here, at this time, he is interceding for the church of the Jews,' as one observes upon the place (f). Before Christ's incarnation, it was an intercession upon credit; since his death it is upon a price paid, not upon promise, but upon performance, or upon value received.

Christ's intercession was not only typified, declared, and exercised, before his incarnation, but it is affirmed in the plainest and strongest terms in the new testament; it is he,

(a) Isa. lxiii. 9. (b) Exod. viii. 29. (c) Πάντοτε ζῶν.

(d) Zech. i. 12, 13. (e) See the supplem. to Pool's annot in loc.

(f) Hutcheson on Zech. i. 12.

who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. He entered into the holy place with his own blood. He is entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us. The blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. He ever lives to make intercession for them (a). Christ's priesthood, or his fulfilling his priestly office, depends upon his intercession. Hence the apostle said, *If he were on earth, he would not be a priest* (b). As the high-priest under the law could not fulfil his office, without carrying the blood and sweet-incense into the most holy place, sprinkling the blood on the mercy-seat, and covering it with the cloud of the incense: So Christ had not fulfilled his priestly office, if he had not entered into the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood, pleading the virtue and merits of it with the Father, as the ground of God being merciful and gracious to the redeemed. Here,

1. It may be alledged, that Christ seemed to disdain this work, when he said, *I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you* (c): to which it may be replied, that the design of these words is not to deny that he would intercede for them, for he does it in the very next chapter; but to declare the infinite love which the Father had for them, which inclined him to grant their prayers; this indeed may be formed into another objection.

2. If God has such a love to his people, and is so well affected to their salvation, what need can there be of Christ's intercession, seeing this love of God towards them must be an effectual advocate in his own breast, to engage him to bestow the spiritual blessings they want? But, if this should set aside Christ's intercession, it might also make the believ-

(a) Rom. viii. 34.—1 John ii. 1.—Heb. ix. 12. & xii. 24.—Isa. liii. 12.

(b) Heb. vi. 4.

(c) John xvi. 26, 27.

er's prayers needless : It might as well be said, that their prayers are superfluous, as well as Christ's intercession is so, seeing God's love will prompt him to give them what blessings they stand in need of. But notwithstanding God's free and eternal love, which moved him to establish the covenant of grace, in which all spiritual blessings are provided and promised ; yet nevertheless he has said, *he will be inquired of for these things, to do them for them (a)*. God will have his perfections acknowledged, and an esteem of his blessings discovered and exercised. God's justice is glorified in Christ's pleading his own merits ; and grace, that lovely attribute, which reigns to eternal life, is honoured by Christ's intercession, which does not eclipse, but displays its glory : And with respect to Christ, God will have his office fulfilled, his care and love to his people employed, and salvation dispensed, according to the divine œconomy and order, and in such a way as shall shew the equity and righteousness, as well as the grace and mercy of his dealings with the redeemed. And this may serve as an answer to a third objection against Christ's intercession, which is,

3. That God had decreed and promised those blessings which Christ intercedes for ; and therefore there was no need of this intercession, for the decree and promise cannot fail, or become void. It is true, God had decreed and promised those blessings ; but we are to remember, that he decreed and promised to dispense them in this way, and not otherwise : He will put an honour upon Christ's sacrifice, and interest with him, in communicating salvation this way to us : He will have Christ to be endeared to us, and make him precious to the souls of believers for ever ; seeing his blood shed on earth and pleaded in heaven, is the canal through which their blessings are conveyed to them. Nor is it any disparagement, but an honour to God's truth and faithfulness, that such a plea is continually urged ; for it

(a) Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

supposes and declares, that God will not break his word, or be false to his promise. He who thus comes to God, declares his belief, *that he is, and that he is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him (a)*. Christ had no foundation to intercede with the Father for us, if he did not know his love to be unchangeable, and that his faithfulness cannot fail, nor his righteousness be subverted ; for otherwise he might plead, as well as die, in vain : but this cannot be ; therefore Christ ever lives to make intercession.

III. I shall next consider the *character* of the intercessor.

1. Christ is in scripture represented as a *great high-priest (b)*. Christ is infinitely more exalted above the legal high priests, than they were above the ordinary priests. Christ's superiority appears both in the constitution of his person, and in the administration of his office, and his relation as Son to the Father.

(1.) His superiority appears in the *constitution* of his person. The law made men high-priests which had infirmities, but the word of the oath makes the Son high-priest who is consecrated for evermore. He is the Son of God, by nature, perfectly pure and holy, and vested with an unchangeable priesthood. It was necessary that our intercessor should partake of both the natures he interposes between, that he might have credit with God, and compassion to man ; that he might plead our cause with a feeling sense, and yet with a prevailing energy, arising from the dignity and merit of his obedience and sufferings. He is a proper *day's man, who can lay his hand upon both (c)* ; he communicates with God in the same nature, and also with us : He is God's fellow and our brother ; we need not be ashamed to go to him, he is our near kinsman ; nor has he any reason to be ashamed to go to God, being his own natural Son : He must then have power with God, as a prince, and prevail. As God he knows all our wants, all our de-

(a) Heb. xi. 6.

(b) Heb. iv. 14.

(c) Job ix. 33.

sires, all our difficulties and dangers, all our sins, all our sorrows, and what is the proper supply, for kind, season, and degree ; and therefore must be most excellently qualified to be an Intercessor with God for us, seeing he ever lives, and always employs his infinite knowledge, power, and grace, for the good of his people. As he is man, he knows how to have compassion on us. He himself, *in the days of his flesh, made supplications, with strong cries and tears ; and was in all points tempted, even as we are, sin only excepted (a) ;* he had no inward lusts to draw him away and entice him ; but outward provocations he had many to turn him aside from God ; yet he did no iniquity, neither was guile found in his mouth : He not only was, but still is, *a merciful and a faithful high-priest (b),* and puts up many a compassionate plea to the Father on the behalf of his distressed servants. *We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities (c),* for in his present exalted interceding state, he is very sensible of our case, and compassionate to his people ; for he has the same natures, and therefore the same compassions, as he had when on earth.

(2.) Christ appears to be a high-priest, superior to the legal high-priest, with respect to the *administration* of his office : The legal high-priest went into an earthly sanctuary, Christ into a heavenly one ; the former but once a year, the latter is ever interceding : Aaron went with the blood of beasts, and incense made of earthly things ; Christ went into the most holy place, with his own blood, and intercedes in virtue of that sacrifice, which was infinitely more pleasing to God than any earthly odours could be. As Intercessor then, he is a great high-priest, highly exalted at God's right hand, not ministering there in a servile posture, for a short time, and first pleading for his own pardon, and then for the people's, as Aaron did ; but as one holy, and higher than the heavens, sitting at God's right hand, he desires and wills

(a) Heb. v. 7.—iv. 15.

(b) Heb. ii. 17.

(c) Heb. iv. 15.

the communication of all those blessings, which he had purchased by his death.

(3.) Christ's *relation* as a Son to the Father, sets him above all other intercessors; Christ hints at this, in those words, which the greatest saint on earth could never have truly affirmed of himself, *Father, I know that thou hearest me always (a)*. A Son so near and dear to the Father must have his ear, and his heart; *This*, said he, *is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (b)*. It is a great matter to have an advocate, or ambassador that is acceptable to the person to whom he is sent; Christ, as he is God's Son, and always his delight, cannot be otherwise conceived of, and therefore he is raised far above all other advocates, or intercessors. Such another could not have been found, either on earth, or in heaven.

2. Christ is an *able* Advocate and Intercessor; able to save to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession: He is qualified with a complete knowledge of the cases of his people; *He needs not that any should testify of man, for he knows what is in man (c)*: He is infinitely wise and skilful; in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: he is qualified to apply to God, in a proper manner, on all occasions. We find him pleading God's holiness(*d*), when he would have his people kept from sin; and his righteousness, when he pleads the accomplishment of his promises; and God gives him his heart's desire, *and doth not withhold the requests of his lips (e)*. He knows the heart of God, and the hearts of men, what will be for God's glory, and his people's good; what God has promised to give, when and how he will do it; and therefore is able to manage every plea in season, and with suitable energy and force: *He is quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord (f)*. He never mistakes a cause, or fails in any which he

(a) John xi. 41, 42.

(b) Mat. iii. 17.

(c) John ii. 25.

(d) John xvii. 23.

(e) Psal. xxi. 28.

(f) Isa. xi. 2, 3.

undertakes : This is too high a character for any other advocate ; but it is very justly due to Christ our Intercessor.

3. Christ is condescending and constant in his work. At the very instant when he was feeling the torments of the cross, to which his enemies had fastened him, he poured forth this most affectionate prayer for his crucifiers, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do (b)*. Here was love that many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown. O the invincible kindness of our Advocate, thus pleading, even upon the cross, for his murderers ! We may admire and adore till there is no spirit left within us, as one speaks (c) : His heavenly glory has not caused him to lessen his care, or lay aside his concern for his people ; *He ever lives in heaven to make intercession for them* : It is not the only end, but it is one great end of his life there. Never was there an advocate so condescending, and so kind as Christ is ; his heart overflows with love, and he fills his mouth with arguments, for those who breathed forth nothing but cruelty against him : they cried, *Crucify him, crucify him* ; he pleaded, *Father, forgive them*. Peter poured out imprecations on the name of Christ, but Christ prayed for Peter, *that his faith might not fail (d)*. Where was there ever such another advocate, who thus blessed those that cursed him, and prayed so fervently for them that hated him, and despitefully used him ? No discouragements, no ill usage could cause him to lay aside his work : Satan finds many ways to stop the mouths of Christians for a time, but he can never silence Christ : He ever lives to intercede, not once a year, as the high-priest formerly, but always. This is the happiness of believers, that Christ freely espouses, and ever pleads the cause of every one of them ; such is his condescension and constancy as he ever makes intercession for all that come to God by him.

(b) Luke xxiii. 34.

(c) Dr. Manton on Isa. liii. 12, p. 587.

(d) Mat xxvi. 74.—Luke xxii. 32.

4. Christ is a *holy* and *righteous* Intercessor. The apostle Paul having declared that Christ *ever lives in heaven to make intercession for such as come to God by him (a)*, has immediately added, *Such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (b)* : His sacrifice was offered to God, without spot, and so is the plea founded upon it. The apostle John has represented our advocate with the Father (*c*), as JESUS CHRIST, *the righteous* ; this must include the purity of his nature, and of his life. Whilst he was in this world he did no iniquity, neither was guile found in his mouth : But now, in heaven, he is not only separate from *sin*, but from *sinner*s ; he intercedes with a holy heart, and with a holy God, and in a holy assembly, where his prayers are no ways hindered. Our prayers, how polluted and defiled are they by sin ! what darkness, deadness, distraction, unbelief, pride, and vanity may we find in them ? But Christ's intercession, as it is founded upon a perfect sacrifice, so it is performed in the most holy sinless perfection : There is not the least sin, either in the matter or manner of his prayers to the Father ; a vain thought could never croud in among his petitions, nor the least unbelief mix with them. Though we never made a sinless address to God, yet our advocate never made one which is sinful. Christ is the righteous advocate : grace and mercy having accepted him, as our high priest, and his oblation being offered, and accepted of God, he has a right to plead the virtue and merits of it with the Father. His office gives him an authority to appear in the presence of God for us. Christ is no intruder ; for he has a commission to plead. The Father said to him, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (d)*. It was part of the original agreement between him and the Father, that he should

(a) Heb. vii. 25.

(b) Heb. vii. 26.

(c) 1 John ii. 1.

(d) Psal. ii. 8.

make intercession for the transgressors (a). He is a righteous advocate ; and as he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, he is fit to manage the taking away our sins, and the restoration of righteousness. He is the righteous advocate, as he pleads the righteous cause. *God is faithful and just to forgive us (b) ;* and therefore Christ acts a faithful and a righteous part, in interceding for that forgiveness. Christ has right and justice on his side, and is engaged in a righteous cause ; and he therefore is to be looked upon as a righteous advocate. Christ is a righteous advocate, as he pleads his own merit and righteousness, as the ground and reason of granting his requests : This is meant by his *entering into the holy place with his own blood (c).* We may look upon our intercessor pleading in heaven, and may say in the words of the great apostles Paul and John, *Who is he that condemns ? it is Christ that died. If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins (d).* He fulfilled a perfect obedience, and presented an atoning sacrifice ; this he pleads with great honour and success in the heavenly temple, as a reason of granting all spiritual blessings to the redeemed. If the cry of the labourers enters into the ears of God, claiming their wages, much more do Christ's obedience and sufferings loudly plead for the blessings which they have purchased. Christ must be a righteous advocate, seeing he pleads a perfect righteousness, which he fulfilled for his people in their room and stead, which therefore gives him a right to claim the purchased possession, the grace and glory of the new covenant. He makes no unrighteous demands ; desires nothing unbecoming the justice, holiness, or veracity of God to grant ; nothing inconsistent with his honour or his people's happiness. As Christ's sufferings were such as became God, and were perfectly suited to his honour, in

(a) Isa. liii. 12.

(b) 1 John i. 9.

(c) Heb. ix. 12.

(d) Rom. viii. 34.—1 John ii. 1.

working out our salvation ; so the plea which Christ raises from them is such as became the respect and honour due to all God's perfections in the application of the salvation, to the souls of the redeemed : He intercedes for no more than he has purchased, for whom he has given a valuable consideration ; he paid, and he pleads a full price of redemption, and therefore is a righteous advocate.

5. Christ is very intimate, both with the persons *for* whom he intercedes, and the person *with* whom he intercedes. When we are told, *we have an advocate with the Father (a)*, this may refer to Christ and to Christians. Christ is an advocate with his Father ; he is in his very bosom, is his dear Son, has always been his delight, and the Father always shews great favour and affection to him : *This is my beloved Son, hear him*, said the Father (*b*). Does he command us to *hear him* ; and will he not hear himself ? Is he well pleased in him ; and yet will he turn a deaf ear to his requests ?—The expression of *an advocate with the Father* may likewise relate to Christians ; there is no contradiction in this, for God is Christ's Father, and their Father (*c*) : this still makes their cause the better ; it is not only a Son that pleads, but they are sons for whom he pleads. God is a Father both to the advocate and the clients : the interest of all is wrapt together ; the advocate is a dutiful Son to the Father, a loving Brother to the client, and God is a tender Father to them both. Our intercessor has the ear and heart of God ; he is advanced high in his favour, and sits on the right hand of his throne ; the advantage and comfort of which I endeavoured above to shew (*d*). Believers may well rejoice, that Christ is gone to the Father, seeing he is an advocate so near the throne, and in such favour with God. Favourites in other courts are often supplanted, and lose their interest with the prince ; but Christ

(a) 1 John ii. 1. (b) Matt. iii. 17. (c) John xx. 17.

(d) See the two sermons on Christ's sitting at God's right hand.

is not only most in favour with God, but he holds it to eternity : as he always was, so he always will be the Father's delight ; and therefore will ever be a glorious intercessor.

6. Christ is the *only* intercessor. The papists grant, that he is the only mediator of reconciliation, but they feign many other mediators of intercession ; but the scriptures speak of but *ONE mediator between God and men* (a) : 'To us there is *one Lord* by whom we come to God ; one person who is our Redeemer and intercessor. He, that single person, who hath an *unchangeable priesthood, ever liveth to make intercession for us* (b). We have an advocate (c), not many advocates, with the Father. Though the virgin Mary was committed to the care of the apostle John, yet he did not do her the honour to join her with Christ, in this work : had he known any thing of her being an advocate, and of other advocates, he should have said, *we have ADVOCATES with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*, his mother and others, who are in peculiar favour with him ; but of that the scripture is wholly silent : and indeed what need could there be of any other intercessors besides Christ, when we are assured in my text, that *he is able to save to the uttermost, for ever, and to perfection, such as come to God by him* ? What room then could there be for others to interpose ? This singular honour is reserved for Christ ; he alone is sufficient to plead and defend the cause of his people : it is nonsense and blasphemy to set up any other intercessors with God. Besides, how should any mere creatures be able to know the cases, and attend to the numerous petitions presented to them, from various parts of the world at once ? It is very injurious to the condescension and love of Christ, to suppose, that any of them should be more inclined to hear, and favour the Christian's cause, than he who

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 5.

(b) Heb. vii. 24, 25.

(c) 1 John ii. 1.

had so loved them, as to die for them ; or that any of them should be more able to manage the plea with God, than he who is the *everlasting Father*, the *wonderful counsellor*, and the *mighty God*.

7. Christ is a *party* with those for whom he intercedes. Those who plead at the bar in our earthly courts, many times, are strangers to their clients, and have no further to do with them, than to take their fees, and make the best of their briefs they can ; and it is no matter to many of them, whether they gain or lose the cause they plead : But with respect to Christ, it is far otherwise ; those for whom he pleads, were the objects of his eternal love : The persons for whom he travailed in death, to bring them forth to God, they are joined to him, and one in spirit with him ; it is given in charge to Christ, not to *lose* any of his sheep (*a*) : his honour and comfort depend upon his presenting them all perfect in glory ; they are all members of his mystical body, and it could not be complete without them : his interest is therefore deeply interwoven with theirs ; his honour inseparably connected with their salvation. We must then look upon him as the fittest person, to plead the cause of his people. It is strange to see, with what coldness and indifference, many Christians plead with God for themselves ; but we have reason to conclude, that Christ is in earnest : the zeal of God's house ate him up in this world ; and we have no ground to think it is less, now he is in heaven : by all the discoveries he has made of himself from thence, it appears, that he is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same (*b*). Christ was very sensible how much his and his people's interest are complicated and united, when he said, *I ascend to my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God* (*c*). Sometimes when he prayed for himself, it was, *not as I will, but as thou wilt* (*d*) ; but when he pleaded

(*a*) John vi. 39.

(*b*) Heb. xiii. 8.

(*c*) John xx. 17.

(*d*) Luke xxii. 42.

for his people, it was peremptorily, and as one that would take no denial ; *Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory (a)*. His thoughts run upon the Father's gift, and his own undertaking ; and therefore he is very solicitous to bring them safe to glory. May I not say, his life, his joy, his glory, are bound up with theirs ? It is one of the glories of our salvation, that Christ, both by affection and interest, is so nearly concerned in it : hence he said, *I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou has given me out of the world, for they are thine : and all thine are mine, and mine are thine, and I am glorified in them (b)*. God the Father, Christ, and believers have a mutual interest and concern in each other ; and particularly, Christ's glory is much concerned in his people's salvation, therefore he so earnestly prayed for them.

APPLICATION.

1. What *encouragement* have we to come to God, by Christ, seeing he ever liveth in heaven, to make intercession for them that do so ? A sight of our advocate at the Father's right hand, may cause us to come cheerfully to the throne of grace. When the Christian comes to God, in the exercise of faith and prayer, he has a friend in the heavenly court, to introduce him, to bring him into the presence of God, and to make him partaker of his favour. Surely then we forget our great intercessor at the Father's right hand, when we either neglect our addresses to God, or grow faint and dispirited in them. Does Christ's intercession never flag ; why then should our hands hang down, and our cries to God grow faint ? Do we not, or rather should we not, go boldly in such a worthy name, and to look to his prevailing intercession ? What force and energy may our poor prayers have with God, when we are washed in the blood of the

(a) John xvii. 24.

(b) John xvii. 9, 10.

Lamb, and they are presented to God perfumed with the sweet incense of his merits? How should it enlarge our hearts to God, to consider how the heart of Christ is enlarged for us? all that come to God by him he receives, and effectually pleads their cause with the Father, and saves them to the uttermost. What then, shall we be strangers to the throne of grace, and seldom appear there? Shall we say in our hearts, It is in vain to serve the Lord; what profit can there be in praying to him?

2. What constant convincing *evidence* have believers of the love of Christ? He came down from heaven, lived a life of sorrow and labour for us on earth, and closed it with an accursed and bitter death; by this one would have thought, he had given sufficient evidence of his love to men, and that here it might have stopped and have gone no farther; but well might he say, that *having loved his own, he loved them to the end (a)*; nay, rather *without end, and for ever*; for so it appears, in his living for ever, to make intercession for them.

3. What *obligations* has Christ laid his people under, to love him, and live to him. Does Christ continually plead his people's cause in heaven; and shall they not plead his cause, and promote his interest all they can, in this world? Does Christ, even now in glory, live a life of continual service to his people; and shall not his *love constrain them to live to him (b)*, and to vindicate his honour, his truth, and his ways? Is it not a reasonable service for Christians to do all they can for Christ on earth, seeing he is doing such great things for them in heaven?

4. From Christ's living for ever to intercede for his people, we may learn the *perpetuity* of the church, and the reason of the Christian's perseverance: Christ ever lives, therefore his people shall never die; consequently they

(a) John xiii. 1. (b) 2 Cor. v. 5, 14.

should always abound in his service : Christ ever intercedes, therefore we are, or shall be, saved to the uttermost, even perfectly and for ever. That faith cannot fail for the continuance of which he has prayed ; nor can such come short of complete and endless happiness, who though they are in the storm and heat of battle, yet are under the protection of a glorious Leader, who will bring all his children to glory, seeing he ever liveth in heaven, to make intercession for them.



SERMON II.

Preached FEBRUARY 20, 1727-8.

He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God through him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.—HEB. vii. 25.

HAVING formerly shewed for whom Christ intercedes, the the certainty of his intercession, and the character of the intercessor, I now proceed : And therefore,

IV. I shall explain the *nature* and *properties* of Christ's intercession.

Before I enter on this, I would premise, that the variation of some circumstances does not alter the nature of Christ's intercession, or nullify and destroy it. We must allow some difference between Christ's intercession for his people, before their conversion, and after it ; before his incarnation, during his abode on earth, and now in heaven ; and yet the intercession itself is for substance the same. Let it also be observed, that Christ's intercession in heaven is performed in a way agreeable to his present glorified state, as sitting on the

right hand of God ; and therefore he does not now prostrate himself, nor present his requests with *strong cries and tears* (a), as he did in the days of his humiliation : This is not consistent with his present exalted triumphant state ; and whatever is contrary thereto must be excluded from our idea of Christ's intercession in heaven. Christ's own words may, perhaps, be the best pattern and representation of it ; *Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory* (b). Which words may inform us in what way and manner Christ manages the work ; it is by expressing his *desire* and *will* to the Father, for the grant of the blessings prayed for. We may further note, that the circumstances of Christ's intercession, which the scripture has left unrevealed, we may, and should, leave undetermined ; as for instance, whether it is *vocal*, or only *mental* ; whether it is by *plea* and *argument* drawn out at length, or in a shorter way ; these, with other things concerning it, we should be content not to know, because God has seen fit to conceal them : It is enough for us, that Christ intercedes in a way known to the Father, and which is sufficient and successful for our salvation.

1st, If we consider the *nature* of Christ's intercession in heaven, it may be said to be ' his *continual appearance*, before the Father, as our great high priest, presenting his sacrifices and desires, in his own name, as the ground and reason of the perfect and perpetual salvation of all true believers.' The following things are comprized in Christ's intercession, as now described.

1. His *continual appearing* in the presence of God, as our great high-priest and advocate. Under the law, the high-priest, in a solemn manner, once a year, presented himself before the Lord, with the blood of the sacrifices, and

(a) Heb. v. 7.

(b) John xvii. 24.

with sweet incense, in his holy vestments, sprinkling the blood, and burning the incense in the most holy place (a) : In like manner we read (b), that Christ is *entered into the heavenly temple, to appear in the presence of God for us* ; which compared with the type, is justly to be interpreted of his entering into heaven, as our great high-priest, and acting there as our advocate and intercessor. The legal intercessor appeared before the ark, which, by reason of the cherubs and mercy-seat, was composed into the form of a throne (c). Christ has entered into the real presence of God, appearing in his sight, and standing before his face. This Christ does, not barely as a friend, but as our great high-priest, who has taken our names on his breast, and into his heart ; and is engaged, by office, to transact and secure our salvation. Hence Christ has said, that *he will confess their names before his Father* (d). His appearance before the Father, under this character, is the more effectual, as it was the Father who called him to, and by a solemn unction and oath invested him in, the office (e) ; and therefore, by his own act, is the more obliged to regard and own him in this sacred work : herein, as in many other things, Christ's intercession differs from that of any other person. Christ acts by special office, pleads in his own name, and pleads his own merits ; whereas, when one Christian prays for another, it is in Christ's name, and for Christ's sake, not his own ; and it is performed as an act of Christian love and duty, and not by virtue of special office. *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, said Christ (f). It is farther to be observed, that though Christ's intercession, as well as his passion, belongs to and derives virtue from his divine person, yet they both are performed, in and by his human nature ; as his divine

(a) Lev. xvi. (b) Heb. ix. 24. (c) See Dr. Owen on loc.
 (d) Rev. iii. 5. (e) Heb. v. 5, 6. (f) John xvi. 23.

nature did not, in itself suffer, so neither does it properly intercede. The human nature was the sacrifice, and presents the requests, and Christ's divine person renders them prevalent.

2. In Christ's intercession is included, his *presenting his sacrifice and merits before God*, as the ground of his audience, and of our complete salvation. *He entered the holy place, by his own blood ; and appears in the midst of the throne, as the Lamb that had been slain (a).* He solemnly presents his sacrifice before the Father, as judge of the perfection of the offering on earth, and of the right it gives him to plead and prevail in heaven, for all the blessings purchased by it : This is, as it were, his shewing his credentials, or full powers, which he has to intercede and save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him. Christ presents that body before God, which had been crucified, and was shut up in the prison of the grave, which *God delivered from prison and judgment, and received up into glory (b) ;* and hereby he makes it evident, that he has paid our debt, purchased our inheritance, and has a very good plea to make use of, for his people's being saved to the uttermost. Christ speaks by his blood, and his blood speaks by its merit : if he had not a mouth to speak, yet his blood has a prevailing voice in the ears of God. As Abel's blood is said to cry from the ground against Cain (*c*), who shed it ; so Christ's blood, by which he entered heaven, cries effectually for those for whom it was shed ; and God can no more forget, or neglect to bless them, when he sees the Lamb that had been slain, appearing before him, than he can forget his covenant with the earth, when he sees his bow in the clouds.

3. Christ *wills and desires*, that all the evil from which he redeemed his people may be averted, and that all the good which he purchased for them, may be enjoyed by them. In what way he signifies his mind and will to the Father,

(a) Heb. ix. 12.—Rev. v. 5. (b) Isa. liii. 8. (c) Gen. iv. 10.

whether with words or without, we need not, as I said before, determine ; it is enough for us to know, that it is done in such a way, as that God *hears* and *answers* him, and gives him *his heart's desire* (a). Christ informed his disciples, before he went to heaven, that he should not cease praying for them there ; *I will*, said he, *pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter* (b) ; which is as if he had said, when I am ascended, I will plead the Father's promise of pouring out the Spirit, for your assistance and comfort. ' It is, as one has observed (c), no ways unbecoming the human nature of Christ, in its glorious exaltation, to pray to God : hence Christ is directed by the Father, to *ask of him*, in his exalted state, *the heathen for his inheritance* (d).' The union of Christ's divine nature with his humanity, does not set it above prayer, now in heaven, any more than it did whilst it was on earth. Christ's willing and desiring our salvation is a petition of right, founded on his merits and God's promises : it is not a mere supplication for mercy, that may be received or rejected ; but it is a plea that is peremptory, that cannot in justice be denied. It runs thus, *Father, I will, that those whom thou hast given me may be with with me* (e). Christ has authority to demand his people's salvation, and every thing that shall promote it : for, though it is all free grace to us, it is all a due debt to him ; it is the purchase of his blood, the *travail of his soul* (f), and the satisfaction which the Father promised he should have. He desires that the promises may be fulfilled, and that the purchase of his death may be granted, which carries in it the nature of the strongest intercession : for, as the Spirit makes intercession for the saints, *with groanings which cannot be uttered* (g), and the Lord knows the mind of the spirit ; so Christ may, by strong desires, though not

(a) Psal. xxi. 2. (b) John xiv. 16.

(c) Dr. Owen on Heb. vii. 25. p. 246.

(d) Psal. ii. 8.

(e) John xvii. 24.

(f) Isa. liii. 11.

(g) Rom. viii. 26.

uttered in words, make intercession for his people, and the Father knows and fulfils his desires. Job, in those early days, is thought to have had his eye upon Christ's intercession, in these words (*a*), *O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour (b)!*

4. Christ presents the prayers of the saints, with *much incense (c)*; or, he presents their persons and services, that they may be acceptable to the Father, through his intercession, which is a desire of their being accepted, on the account of his own merits: for all his intercession is in the virtue of his sacrifice, and is a plea founded on a sacrifice. When Christ is represented as an advocate with the Father, we are led to think, not only that he defends his people against all the charges brought against them, and maintains their cause; but also, that he solicits for all those blessings, which are proper for his people, in their divers seasons and circumstances. This is strongly implied in the apostle Paul's encouragement to us to *come boldly to the throne of grace*, for grace and mercy to help in the time of need, because *we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens for us (d)*: or, we have an able compassionate advocate and intercessor there, who is always pleading for that grace and mercy, which suits the case and necessities of every one of his clients, which are his covenant children. As Christ presents all the prayers of his people, that are agreeable to God's will; so he pleads for the com-

(*a*) Job xvi. 21.

(*b*) In the Annotations published by the Westminster assembly, the words are thus rendered, *He will plead for a man with God, and the son of man for his friend*. To which this sense is given, "Christ, who is God and man, will plead my cause with his Father; he will prevail, because he is God equal with the Father; he will undertake it, because he will be man like to me." Mr. Curyt and some others fall in with this interpretation.

(*c*) Rev. viii. 4.

(*d*) Heb. iv. 15, 16.

munication of all those blessings, which are agreeable to his death, and which he purchased and procured thereby.

Some of Christ's adversaries would confound his oblation and intercession, and make them the same thing ; but they are evidently distinct, in many things, though closely united in some respects. Christ's oblation is the payment, his intercession is the plea founded upon it ; the former was made on earth, the latter is done in heaven ; the one consisted in his death, the other is the product of his new life ; the sacrifice was offered but once, the intercession is perpetual.

Our justification before God, and acceptance with him, is a matter of great importance and comfort ; herein God is considered as a Judge, man as a criminal, Satan as the accuser, the law as the indictment, conscience as the evidence, Christ as the believer's advocate, pleading his own obedience and sufferings, as a ground of our forgiveness and eternal life. It is also owing to Christ's intercession, that believers are kept in a state of peace with God : Such are the daily provocations of the best of saints, in this world, that their persons and services would soon become odious to God, did not Christ present the memorial of his sacrifice, and continually plead the merit of his death, as the ground of their acceptance, and peace with God (*a*). Our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God only by Jesus Christ (*b*), through the much incense of our great high-priest ; *This is the confidence that we have in him* (*c*), (the Son of God) (*d*) *that if we ask any thing, according to his will, he hears us* ; and if he hear us, we have the petitions that we ask of him. If our prayers, for the substance of them, are approved of by him, his incense renders them acceptable to the Father, and so we have the petitions which we ask of him. Christ prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail (*e*),

(*a*) Eph. i. 1.

(*b*) 1 Pet. ii. 5.

(*c*) 1 John v. 14.

(*d*) 1 John v. 13.

(*e*) Luke xxii. 32.

and directed him after his recovery to strengthen his brethren, by that prayer ; implying, that it was not only for *his* perseverance, but for his apostles also, and for all Christians, under their sore conflicts : *He saves to the uttermost, every one that comes to God by him.*

2dly, I shall consider the *properties* of Christ's intercession ; several were hinted when I spoke of his character ; others I shall have occasion to speak of in the process of this discourse ; and therefore shall only briefly mention these few following.

1. It is *constant*, or continual ; *He ever lives to make intercession.* Other advocates cannot always attend the affairs of their clients, but Christ does so continually : There is no interruption or end of this service ; and how comfortable may this be to the believer !

2. It is *complete* and *full* ; there is nothing wanting in it : he did all things well on earth, so he does in heaven ; *He never fails nor is discouraged (a) :* he makes every motion, urges every request, refutes every accusation, solicits every grace and mercy, in proper time, order, and measure. All this and more is signified in the words of the text ; *He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.*

3. It is a work of great *benefit* and *comfort* to believers. It is their defence against apostacy, and a spring of consolation at all times, could they make use of it, as may more fully appear afterwards. In all wants, fears, and dangers, this is our relief, we have a throne of grace, to which we may have recourse, and the prevailing intercession of our great high-priest : therein our eternal salvation, and consequently all our comfort is wrapped up and secured.

4. It is a most *honourable* and *glorious* work for Christ. It shews the glory of his love to his people, that he not only cared and died for them on earth, but still cares as much

(a) Isa. xlii. 4.

for them in heaven ; as appears in his continual intercession on their behalf. It is for Christ's honour, that the Father ever continues him in his office, and takes pleasure in him, and in his management of it : It is for Christ's honour that his oblation and sacrifice has such infinite and lasting virtue in it, as to support so many pleas as are built upon it : it continues for ever ; what a wonderful sacrifice must that be, which purchased all that grace and glory, which Christ prays for, and applies to all that come to God by him. It is also to the honour of Christ's faithfulness, that he ever holds out in this work, and manages it, now he is higher than the heavens, with undefiled integrity, and that for ever. The Son is consecrated for evermore ; not after *the law of a carnal commandment*, but after *the power of an endless life* (a).

Some hereticks of old, and others of late, have endeavoured to turn Christ's intercession to his disgrace ; and would infer from it, that he is not God, but a creature, in an inferior, indigent, and dependent state. Their pretence is, that if he has all-sufficiency in himself, all the fulness of the Godhead, what need has he to pray to the Father, for what he has in himself, and can communicate at his pleasure ! The objection may appear plausible to some, at first sight, yet it is capable of an answer, which may be satisfactory to the judicious and impartial. It must indeed be allowed on all hands, that *all the fulness of the Godhead, dwells bodily in Christ*, and yet that *he makes intercession* (b) ; these two therefore are not so inconsistent, or absurd, as our adversaries suppose, unless they will charge Christ with inconsistency and absurdity in his conduct. The matters of fact are too plain to be denied ; and therefore either there is no absurdity for one, who has the fulness of the Godhead, to make intercession, or else Christ is guilty of that absurdity ; but there is no absurdity for him, who is true and real God, in one nature, to pray to the Father, in another nature, or

(a) Heb. vii. 28.

(b) Col. ii. 9.

in his human nature, which subsists in his divine person, for those blessings, which, according to the divine economy, and his office, as Mediator, were agreed to be that way given and dispensed to men. It is not absurd for one to ask of another, what he was able to do of himself, when, by mutual agreement, it has been fixed and determined to proceed in this way of petition and answer (*a*), as agreeable to the office the petitioner bears, and as it is for the good of those whose cause he has undertaken; now, this is the real state of the case before us: A certain order of proceeding was agreed upon, among the persons in the ever-blessed Trinity; the Father acts as Judge, and Lord supreme; the Son, as Mediator, and High-priest, to whom it belonged, under that character, to pray for the people for whom he acted, having taken their nature, to qualify him to die, and intercede for them. Christ's love to the Father, his desire to advance his honour, his agreement with him as to the method of salvation, the office in which he acted, and the good of the persons for whom he acted, all required, that he should not only die, but intercede for his people; and yet he was and is God, of the same nature, and all-sufficiency, with the Father. When it is said, that Christ *cried to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard* (*b*), it does not imply, that Christ was not able to raise himself; for he said, *I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again* (*c*); but his office, as high-priest, required his application to the Father, that he might receive his life from him, to whom, as judge, he offered it, as a testimony that he was well pleased with his sacrifice: on which account, God the Father, as bringing again from the dead our Lord Jesus, is called *the God of peace* (*d*). Christ presents his prayers to the Father on our account, and as our high-priest: In the days of his

(*a*) Vide Bisterfeld. contra Crellium, p. 200.

(*b*) Heb. v. 7.

(*c*) John x. 18.

(*d*) Heb. xiii. 20.

flesh, and that others might know the Father's approbation of him, when a thing was done with his consent first had and obtained, he thus spoke in a solemn address to him, *Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me ; I knew that thou hearest me always, but for the sake of the people that stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me (a).* It is then neither inconsistent with Christ's power, nor deity, that he intercedes with the Father.

V. I shall inquire into the *extent* of Christ's intercession, whether it be limited, or universal. Christ himself has satisfied this inquiry, in a few words which are full and very plain ; *I pray not for the world, (said he) but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world (b).* The friends of universal redemption have not, as far as I know, had the boldness to affirm, that Christ intercedes for all, though they would have us believe, that he died for all men ; for, indeed, such an affirmation would be a direct giving Christ the lie, or contradicting what he has openly declared : My text also signifies the persons for whom Christ intercedes, *those that come to God by him ;* by which words we are to understand all, and only such, as come to God by true faith in Christ ; or true believers, exclusive of others.

1. Christ intercedes only for those who are *given him out of the world*, and not *for the world*. This is plain, from Christ's own words ; *I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world ; for they are thine.* Hence Christ is brought in saying, *My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints, and to the excellent in the earth, in whom is all my delight (c).* As for the rest he said, *I will not take up their names into my lips ;* or, *I will not intercede for them.* Here we are carefully to observe, that though Christ's intercession extends only to such as *come to God by him*, yet they have an interest in it, before they actually come ; *I pray*, said Christ, *for them*

(a) John xi. 12.

(b) John xvii. 9.

(c) Psal. xvi. 3, 4.

who shall believe in me, through their word (a). He intercedes for the first grace, as well as for all future graces ; there was a stock of prayers laid up in heaven for his people, before they were born. As Abraham said, *O that Ismael might live in thy sight* ; so Christ is deeply concerned to bring home all the chosen seed : Having spoken of the Jews (b), he has added these words with relation to the Gentiles, *Other sheep I have, which are not of this old ; those also I must bring* : they need his prayers before conversion, as well as afterwards ; and, blessed be God, they are not excluded ! What a comfort and encouragement is this, with respect to our unconverted hearers, relations, or friends, for whom we travail in birth, till Christ is formed in them ! that they not only have an interest in our prayers, but also (if they belong to the election of grace) in Christ's prayers ! and how far off soever they are at present (c), yet, if Christ has prayed for them, they shall come. He did not say barely, it *may be*, but it certainly *shall be*. Christ's prayer and merit are of equal extent ; he prays for all that shall believe, and only for such : He died not for the world, but for those that were given him out of the world, who either then did, or hereafter should believe.

2. Christ intercedes for, *every individual member* in particular ; not only for all in the gross, or comprehensively taken in a body, as the elect or church of God (d) ; but he calls his own sheep by name, and has a particular regard for every single Christian. As Peter was personally prayed for in the hour of his danger, according to what Christ told him, *I have prayed for thee, (for thee, PETER) that thy faith fail not (e)* ; so Christ prays for every other believer, particularly, *If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father (f)* ; if any child, any one of the little children sins, he has an Advocate with the Father. Some poor de-

(a) John xvii. 20.

(b) John x. 16.

(c) John vi. 31.

(d) John x. 9.

(e) Luke xxii. 32.

(f) 1 John ii. 1.

jected believers are prone to think, they are so weak, sinful, and unworthy, as that Christ will take no notice of them, or they must be shut out of his prayers; but, on the contrary, the scripture has assured us, that if any man among the little children sins, he has an Advocate with the Father. Christ offers the prayers of *all saints* (*a*); and therefore of every saint, upon every occasion. How hard is it then, Christian, to contradict the word, and to wound thyself? Christ carries his lambs in his bosom (*b*); and wilt thou leap out and run away from him? He will not break the bruised reed (*c*); and shall the poor Christian do it himself? Christ doth not despise the day of small things (*d*), why then should we? Can he have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way; and shall such who so much need his compassion reject it, and make that a reason of their being excluded, which Christ makes a reason of his special care and concern for them? He carries home the lost sheep rejoicing; of all given him he loses nothing, but gives eternal life to as many as are given him (*e*): Every one therefore, who comes to God by him, even the weakest true believer, is bound to believe, that Christ intercedes for him; and how weak, distracted, and unworthy soever his own prayers may be, how long soever he has cried, and cannot perceive that he is heard, yet this is certain, that Christ prays and prevails for him, for the Father always hears him (*f*). He that secured a tempted Peter's faith from failing, will do, and does the same for every other believer, how small soever his faith is, or how great soever his sins, temptations, and fears may be. Let but this one thing be made clear, that Christ is chosen, received, and relied upon, by a gospel faith, and the believer may, with the apostle, bid

(*a*) Rev. viii. 3.

(*b*) Isa. xl. 11.

(*c*) Matt. xii. 20.

(*d*) Heb. v. 2.

(*e*) Luke xv. 5, 6.—John xvii. 2.

(*f*) John xi. 42.

defiance to all his enemies ; and may say, who is he that condemns, since Christ makes intercession for me ? he is my Advocate with the Father, I shall be saved to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives in heaven, to make intercession for me (*a*).

VI. I shall represent the *importance*, and *prevalence* of Christ's intercession.

1. The importance of Christ's intercession is signified in my text, as the perfection of our happiness ; and his ability to perfect our salvation, are both represented as depending thereupon. Why is Christ *able to save to the uttermost* ? because *he ever lives to make intercession* ; implying, that he would not be able to save to the uttermost, were it not for his intercession ; did he not intercede, the perfection of his priesthood would be wanting ; one thing which he had engaged, as our surety to do, would be neglected, and so the work of redemption would have been incomplete ; and an insufficient saviour, is no saviour at all. The life of the legal high-priest depended upon his covering the ark and the mercy-seat, with the cloud of the smoke of the incense (*b*) ; in like manner the residence and glory of Christ in heaven, and his ability to save his people, depend upon his life of intercession for them in heaven. What confidence could we have had to come to God, or what acceptance could our prayers have met with, if Christ were not our Advocate, and Intercessor, at God's right hand ? It is unbecoming the wisdom of God, to appoint a needless, or an useless employment for Christ in heaven ; and it is inconsistent with his veracity, to lay the stress of our perfect salvation upon Christ's intercession, if we could have been perfectly saved without it. The honour of God's justice is preserved, in Christ's pleading his merit and satisfaction as a ground of our salvation, and the honour of his grace is promoted, by its being solicited for us, in the prayers of

(*a*) Rom. viii. 34.—Heb. vii. 25.

(*b*) Levit. xvi. 13.

so great a person, as Christ is. His intercession then is of great importance, both to God and himself, and also to us, on the accounts now mentioned.

2. The next thing to be considered, is the *prevalency* of Christ's intercession: This is a very useful and comfortable truth, clearly revealed in scripture. As it was formerly said of Jacob, (a type of Christ,) *As a prince thou hast power with God, and hast prevailed (a)*; so may it much more be said of Christ, and indeed is so prophesied of him, in these words of the twenty-first Psalm? *Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withheld the requests of his lips (b)*. This Psalm is allowed, by many ancient and modern writers, to speak of Christ (c); and the cited passage, as well as others, is eminently fulfilled in him: what ancient prophecy foretold, Christ declared to be fulfilled, and to be universally true, when he said, *I know thou hear-est me always (d)*.

(1.) If this was true, when he had not as yet paid the price of redemption, shall it fail, when he presents and pleads his *perfect oblation*? Did God hear him when he pleaded on the credit of it; and will he deny him when he pleads actual and full payment? His sacrifice must lose its virtue before his intercession can want its prevalency; for his intercession being founded on his death, the former must be as acceptable to God as the latter was. God was at liberty to have accepted of a sacrifice, in our stead, or not; but when he has accepted it, as satisfactory and sufficient, there is no longer room to deny the blessings purchased by it, when demanded by the purchaser. As grace and mercy admitted Christ to be a sacrifice in our room, so justice requires that his plea be admitted, when he claims that for which he has given a valuable consideration: The Father

(a) Gen. xxxii. 28.

(b) Psal. xxi. 2.

(c) See Patric. in loc. Charnock Intercess p. 1131. Pool, Annot.

(d) John xi. 42.

cannot deny him his requests, without disowning the merit of his oblation ; but that he can never do, having smelt a sweet savour in it, and openly owned its perfection (a). The argument is short and full : If his sacrifice is perfect, his plea upon it must be prevalent ; if that obtained eternal redemption for us, this must succeed in soliciting the grant and application of every part of it : If Abel's blood prevailed for vengeance upon him that shed it, Christ's blood must prevail for the salvation of those for whom it was shed. *The Judge of all the earth will do right ; and Christ's blood speaks better things than that of Abel (b).*

(2.) God is under the obligation of a solemn promise, that Christ *shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied (c)* : but this promise could never be fulfilled if any blessing he has purchased for the redeemed were withheld when he has not only paid, but prayed for it. God has declared, that *his covenant shall stand fast with Christ, and his faithfulness shall not fail (d)*. Christ must then be heard, seeing he prays for what the Father has promised.

(3.) The end pursued by Christ in his intercession, is agreeable to the Father ; and therefore his intercession must needs be prevalent. The whole design of it may be expressed in those words of Christ, and the Father. *Father, glorify thy name : Then there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again (e)*. All Christ's prayers are for such things as glorify God the Father, Himself, and the Spirit. Therefore, as God regards his own glory, he will regard Christ's intercession. When Christ prayed to be in heaven, to be at this work of intercession there, it was that he might glorify the Father : *Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, saying, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify*

(a) Eph. v. 2.

(b) Heb. xii. 24.

(c) Isa. liii. 11.

(d) Psal. lxxxix. 28.

(e) John xi. 28.

thee (a). This prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel is thought to be a specimen or model of Christ's intercession; and if so, it comes up fully to my purpose, that Christ's intercession has God's glory for the end of it; and therefore is always prevalent. To be well assured of this, will be of excellent use against our unbelief and discouragements; and therefore I will proceed a little further upon it.

(4.) Christ's intercession is prevalent with the Father, because it is always agreeable to the Father's will. In the time of his agonies, the human will in Christ inclined to that exemption from suffering, which was not agreeable to the will of God; but then it was only conditionally, and may properly be called a wish or desire. *If it be possible may this cup pass from me; nevertheless thy will be done (b),* said our Lord, when prostrated in the garden: But now, in glory, as there is no such occasion, so Christ's human will is so absolutely under the power of his divine will as God, and under the influence of the Spirit of grace, that there is no room to suppose that he is capable of putting up one request to the Father, but what is entirely agreeable to his will: He delighted to do his Father's will on earth; and no less doth he delight to comply with it in heaven. Now, seeing the will of Christ, whereby he intercedes, is the same with the will of the Father, with whom he intercedes, the Father cannot reject the will of the Intercessor, without offering violence to his own; and he must deny himself, at the same time that he denies his Son. If it holds true, that when we ask any thing, according to the will of God, he hears us, and we have the petitions we ask of him (c): It cannot be less certain, that Christ asking only what is according to the will of God, is heard in every thing, and has all the petitions that he puts up granted to him.

(a) John xvii. 1.

(b) Matt. xxvi. 39.

(c) 1 John v. 14.

(5.) Christ's intercession is performed by virtue of a *commission*, or an *office*, which he has received from the Father. Will he authorise him to plead, and then refuse his plea when it is every way agreeable to his will as to matter, manner, end, and right to use it? This cannot be; he that made Christ a priest for ever, and gave him power to plead, and admitted him into the most holy place, in order thereunto, will not reject his plea when he makes it: He pleads with authority, and therefore with success. Christ intercedes with one who has a great love to the person interceding, and the persons for whom he intercedes; the Advocate and the clients are all dear to him; and therefore Christ's intercession must needs be prevalent, seeing there is nothing in law or equity against it; if indeed there were, the righteous Judge could not, by his affection to the parties, be engaged to do an unjust thing: but seeing what Christ prays for is just and right; and seeing the Father has such a love, both to Christ, and to those for whom he intercedes, there is no room to doubt his success. *Thou art my Son*, said God; *ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance (a)*. Such a Son shall be denied in nothing that he asks.

(6.) Nor should we forget the *love* which God bears to the clients, as well as to the Advocate: He loved them, and chose them from eternity; he sent his Son to die for them, in time, and his Spirit to convert them; and he has received Christ up into glory, in quality of a high-priest, to intercede for them; and shall he, after all these marks of affection to them, turn a deaf ear to the requests that are made for them, either for grace or glory? Can he love them so dearly, and yet deny them any thing that should make them happy, or do them good? It is unreasonable to think so: Therefore let us conclude, that Christ is a prevailing Intercessor; he himself thus declared; *I say not that I will*

(a) Psal. ii. 7, 8.

pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you (a): That is, I will not now insist on the interest *I* have with the Father, but that which *you* have with him; his love to you disposeth him to do all that is needful for your good.

(7.) There is an infinite dignity derived from Christ's *person* to his intercession as well as to his sacrifice; and therefore it is prevalent. Though the intercession is made in and by his human nature, yet it is the act of his divine person, or belongs to him; and being the work of such a person, it must be of great value. 'The intercession of such a divine person is as powerful as his sufferings were meritorious,' as one speaks (*b*).—The other characters of the Intercessor, as being infinitely wise, holy, faithful, and dear to God, were hinted before; and therefore I shall not insist on them here.

(8.) We may conclude the prevalency of Christ's intercession, from the instances which we have of its *success*. Christ prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail; and he lived and died a glorious believer: He prayed for the apostles that they might be kept from the evil of the world, or from moral evil; and the purity of their lives was an answer of Christ's prayers: He no sooner ascended, but he prayed the Father for the effusion of the Spirit, which was granted in a wonderful manner; and in granting this, God virtually granted all spiritual blessings; at least we may use the apostle's way of reasoning, he who withheld not the Spirit, but gave him freely, when Christ interceded for him, will doubtless with him, also freely give us all things he shall desire; for having granted the greater, there is no reason to think he will withhold the less.

VII. I shall mention some of the *fruits* and *effects* of Christ's intercession. In the general, our complete and entire salvation is ascribed to Christ's intercession; and there-

(a) 1 John xvi. 27.

(b) Charnock on Intercess. p. 1133.

fore all the parts of it are the fruits thereof. *He saves to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for us.* But more particularly,

1. The preservation and welfare of the church is the effect of it. *O Lord of hosts, said Christ, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem? And the Lord answered the angel with good and comfortable words (a).* At Christ's intercession the Father turns the captivity of Zion. As Christ promised, that the gates of hell should not prevail against his church, so his intercession secures her safety; and when she is brought low restores her. This teaches us to whom we should look under the most discouraging prospects. In the vision which John had (b), Christ from heaven is represented in his priestly garments, in the midst of the churches, holding the ministers in his right hand, and his voice is said to be as *the sound of many waters*; his intercession for his church is most powerful, and effectual.

2. The mission, or pouring out of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, was a fruit of his intercession: Before his death he declared (c), he would pray the Father to send the Comforter; when he ascended up on high he received and gave this gift to his church (d), the most comprehensive, and the most glorious gift next to himself, which he could bestow; for hereby the conversion, edification, and eternal glory of all the chosen seed are secured. A gospel ministry, and all ministerial gifts and success are to be looked upon as the fruits of Christ's intercession, procuring the mission of the Spirit for these ends; and therein for the *edifying his body, till we all come to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus (e).*

3. Security from condemnation is another effect of Christ's intercession. None can condemn so long as Christ makes intercession for us. Satan, as an adversary, accuses; but

(a) Zech. i. 12, 13.

(b) Rev. i. 13, 15.

(c) John xiv. 16.

(d) Acts. ii. 33.

(e) Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Christ, as an Advocate, silences and rebukes him, vindicates his people, and keeps open their way of access to God, and of their communion with him. Sin and Satan would soon find a way to debar us of this privilege, were it not for Christ's intercession : Through his blood, which pleads for us, we have boldness to draw nigh to God. This is what we can never enough value, or bless God for ; all our spiritual comfort and eternal safety depend upon it, and flow from it.

4. Another fruit of it is God's *hearing* and *answering* his people's prayers. As they come from us, they are polluted, defiled, and attended with many infirmities ; for we know not what to pray for as we ought (*a*) ; but they ascend acceptably to God, as they are perfumed with Christ's much incense (*b*). Christ is represented saying, *Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake ; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake O God of Israel, because for thy sake I have bore reproach* (*c*). 'This is the ground of our acceptance at the throne of grace, the intercession of our great high-priest, who is passed into the heavens for us (*d*).

5. The numerous *conversions* of souls to God, since Christ's ascension, have been the fruits of his intercession. All who have believed through the word of the gospel, have felt and enjoyed the power and fruit of that prayer of Christ begun on earth, and no doubt continued in heaven, *I pray not for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word* (*e*) ; which is, as if he had said, Holy Father, I desire, that those who are yet to be brought home to me may taste and feel the power of thy love and grace, in the gospel, so as to rest on me by faith, and may have all the privileges and blessings of believers.

6. Preservation and perseverance in the *faith*, is the fruit

(*a*) Rom. viii. 26. (*b*) Rev. vii. 4. (*c*) Psal. lxi. 6, 7.
 (*d*) Heb. iv. 15, 16. (*e*) John xvii. 20.

of Christ's intercession. All the believers, as well as Peter, owe the security of their faith, and their recovery from backslidings, to Christ's prayer for them : they are preserved in Christ Jesus ; he restores the believer, and makes him to walk in the paths of righteousness for his prayer's sake.

7. All *supplies of grace* are the fruit of Christ's intercession. The attendance of our great high-priest, at the throne of grace, and his prevailing pleas there, are the causes of our *finding grace to help in time of need (a)*. For this reason, it may be, among others, it is called *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* ; and we are said to *receive grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ*.

8. *Eternal life* is the fruit of Christ's intercession. This is being *saved to the uttermost* ; and thus Christ saves believers, because he ever lives in heaven to make intercession for them.

Thus we see something of the nature, properties, extent, prevalency, and fruits of Christ's intercession, and may gather what reason the apostle had to lay a stress upon it, as he did in my text. What remains is to hint some heads of application.

APPLICATION.

1. This doctrine informs us of the injury the *Papists* do Christ, in joining other intercessors with him : The scriptures speak of but *one* advocate and intercessor in heaven ; but the Romanists tells us there are *many* others. None but Christ has merit or authority to plead there : their doctrine is therefore a vile indignity put upon Christ, as if he was not able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Is there any other that has more knowledge of our cause, more compassion to move him to espouse it, more wisdom to manage it, more favour with God, or a better plea to use than he ? Or, in a word, is there any other authorised of God to intercede with him, in heaven, for his

(a) Heb. iv. 15, 16.

people on earth? We know that God has appointed Christ, admitted him into his presence, and heard his prayers.: But as for all the rabble of popish intercessors, we know not whence they are: however, this we know, that they are not of God; and that they are, and must be, injurious to the office and honour of our one and only Mediator, between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

2. From Christ's intercession let us learn that he is *true God*, and *true man*. If he was not man, he could not properly pray; if he is not God, he cannot prevail, know all our wants, supply them, and save us to the uttermost. A mere creature cannot know all things, search all hearts, know all the distant groanings of millions of labouring minds at once, see all their wants, difficulties, and dangers, and provide a suitable supply and remedy: he that can do this, as our Intercessor does, must have in himself omniscience, omnipotence, and all-sufficiency; and he that is possessed of these is, and must be God.

3. What *comfort* and *encouragement* may believers draw from Christ's intercession? What a mighty encouragement is it to go to God, and be much in prayer, seeing we have an Intercessor at his right hand to present our prayers? We have a friend in the heavenly court, to plead our cause, whose intercession never fails; shall then our prayers flag or our spirits faint? Has he power as a prince, and prevails? and shall we give over all for lost, and say, it is in vain to pray to him? There must be great force and energy in our prayers, when we are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and our requests are enforced by his intercession. Some poor dejected Christians are apt to think, they are miserable and destroyed almost to the utmost; such should remember, that the great Intercessor is able to save to the utmost, all that come to God by him, whatever their sins and miseries have been, or are; and what can they desire more? What salvation can be greater?—It may be, Christian, thy darkness,

deafness, unbelief, slavish fears, straitness of heart in prayer, and other sins have abounded ; but still the saving ability of the intercessor much more abounds : his merit, wisdom, compassion, and prevalence with God, are far greater to save the believer, than all his sins and temptations can be to destroy him. *If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father (a) ;* yet still we must be careful to avoid sin as far as we can ; and for that end we should go to God, and plead hard with him for his Spirit and grace, to keep us from it ; remembering that Christ is praying that his people may be sanctified and kept from evil. With reference to that, in the model of his intercession, or his prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel, Christ said, *These things speak I in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves (b).* Christ's blood can and does speak for the Christian, when he cannot plead for himself : How may this encourage the poor believer, to go to God with full assurance of faith, as a ship under full sail to the harbour, carried in by the sweet gales of Christ's intercession ?

If the Spirit has been making intercession in a Christian with labouring and unutterable desires after God, it is a sign Christ is interceding for him ; for, ' the Spirit's intercession ' in the heart is but the echo of Christ's intercession in heaven,' as one speaks (c) : what comfort is there in this, for such as thus come to God by Christ ? Christ goes to God for them, and never leaves the suit till he has saved his client to the uttermost, brought him to the King's palace, with joy and gladness, and has set him above all dangers and miseries. O how safe and happy is the believer, in such an Advocate with the Father, whose love never grows cold, whose merit is never exhausted, and whose plea never grows weak or fruitless ? If it is a comfort to have a share in the

(a) 1 John. ii. 1.

(b) John xvii. 13.

(c) Goodwin of Christ's intercession, p. 124.

prayers of our gracious friends ? what joy may it afford the Christian, that he has an interest in Christ's prevailing intercession for ever continued in heaven. Noah, Job, and Daniel may be denied, but Christ never can : Satan often baffles us, but he cannot stand before Christ ; he easily finds a way to distract our prayers, but he can never obstruct Christ's requests, or render them ineffectual. If the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much, shall not Christ's much more ? How may these considerations strengthen our faith, encourage our prayers, and increase our comfort and joy in coming to God by Christ ?

4. If Christ ever lives to intercede for his people, then great and affecting is his *love* to them : he lived a sorrowful life, he died a bitter death for them on earth, and employs his glorious life in interceding for them in heaven. What manner of love is this ? Can he never do too much for us ? Is he never weary of his work, how painful or endless soever it be ? How much then does his love pass our knowledge, our highest admiration ? The glory of his throne, the adoration of angels, the Hosannahs of the saved, the delights he has with his Father cannot divert him from a care and concern for his poor people in this world, or cause him to intermit his pleas for them ? It is the constant business of his heavenly life, to make intercession for them ; behold then how he loves them !

5. What a *woful condition* are they in, who, though they pretend to come to God, yet do not come by Christ ? The Jews, though they have lost their temple, ark, priests, and sacrifice, yet will not come to God by Christ ; they neither value his sacrifice nor intercession : When the law cannot save them, they reject the gospel salvation ; whilst they have Moses and the prophets pleading against them, they refuse to have Christ to plead for them : they cannot save themselves by their own pleas ; what then remains but that destruction should come upon them to the utmost ; and

not on them only, but on all others who come not to God by Christ, and have no part in his intercession? Such may hear him pleading against them, in these terrible words, *Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them (a)!*

6. How safe is the church under the *patronage* of such an Intercessor? He ever lives to intercede and save it to the utmost; therefore Christ's church can never die, be lost, or miserable. Christ cannot fail of his end, and therefore Christians cannot be disappointed of their salvation. If Christ ever lives to intercede for them, then there will be some who fear his name to the end of the world, who shall come to God by him, for whom he always intercedes. This is a good evidence, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the church, or extirpate Christ's interest out of the world. That faith cannot fail which he preserves by his intercession, nor can those in whom it dwells, fail from among men, till there is either an end of the world, or an end of Christ's prevailing, (may I not say) almighty intercession.

7. How valuable are the *souls* of believers and their salvation? The men of the world despise them, as they do indeed their own souls, and their salvation. How impossible is it to shun multitudes in the open streets, whose tongues are set on fire of hell, who are calling upon God for that damnation to which they are hasting? These wretches have surely no sense of the worth of souls, and of the value of salvation; no belief that Christ is in heaven interceding for salvation, whilst they, on earth, are soliciting damnation to seize upon themselves and others. However, the worth of souls, the importance and excellence of their salvation may be clearly seen from Christ's intercession: He who is infinitely wise and good, would not spend his glorious life in heaven in pleading for things that are only fancies or trifles, things of no reality, or of no importance. Let us then be-

(a) Psalm lxi. 24.

lieve the reality and excellence of the saint's future eternal blessedness.

8. Does Christ love believers in heaven? Does he live and plead for them there? Then how much are they bound to *love him*, to *live to him*, and to *plead for him* on earth? Since he will be ashamed of such as are ashamed of him before men, when he appears in glory, shall we be ashamed of him and his cause? Does he always include our interests in his prayers, and shall we exclude his interest out of our prayers? Is he so much concerned for our happiness and shall we have no concern for his honour, or but little? Does he always plead our cause with his Father, against our enemies, and shall we never plead his cause, either with his friends to encourage them, or with his enemies to silence and convince them? Did he not only die, but does he always live for us, and shall we always live to ourselves and not to him? How disingenuous and ungrateful would this be! Let us then remember our obligations, and follow after, and abound in that faith, love, and obedience to Christ, which become all such, who come to God by him, and shall by him be saved to the utmost, seeing he ever lives in heaven to make intercession for them.

OF
CHRIST'S SECOND COMING
TO
JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUS-
NESS,
OPENED AND APPLIED;
IN
FOUR SERMONS.

SERMON I.

Preached APRIL 23, 1728.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom.—2 TIM. iv. 1.

HAVING formerly inquired, what Christ is doing at the Father's right hand, I now come to shew what he will do, when he descends from heaven again; then he will *judge the quick and the dead*. This future judgment is brought in as a reason of that solemn charge which the apostle Paul gave to Timothy, to *preach the word in season, and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine*, without being soon weary of it, or desisting from it, to avoid trouble, or for want of desired success. Christ will come again to judge all men; therefore Timothy was under his eye, and accountable to him for his ministry: what care therefore ought he to take to fulfil it? *We must all appear before the*

judgment-seat of Christ (said the same apostle, on another occasion :) *wherefore we labour, whether present or absent, that we may be accepted of him ; and knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men (a).* It will be very dreadful for any unbeliever, especially for wicked and slothful ministers, to appear before Christ's judgment-seat : and even the best ministers, such as Timothy was, have need to be warned and excited by the thoughts of the future judgment, to a due discharge of their work.

The time of this judgment is, in my text, said to be at *his appearing*, and *his kingdom* : From these words some have inferred, that the day of judgment should last a thousand years ; and that the dead in Christ, being raised and absolved at his first appearance, shall reign a thousand years with him on the earth, before the wicked shall be raised and receive their judgment : for this reason, as they think, Christ's appearance, judgment, and kingdom are joined together. But from the connection between Christ's appearing and his judging the quick and dead, it rather appears, that the saints and sinners shall be assembled at once before the judgment-seat of Christ : and though the saints shall be raised first, and first receive their sentence, yet both righteous and wicked shall, at the same time, meet in judgment, the sheep being placed on Christ's right hand, and the goats on his left (*b*). Though the saints shall first receive their sentence, yet the execution of the sentence first begins upon the wicked, according to the scriptures (*c*). How this order of proceeding can consist with the before-mentioned scheme, I see not : As to the apostle's connecting Christ's judging, and his kingdom together, that might be only to shew, that the judgment of the great day will be a glorious exercise and discovery of Christ's kingly power, and sovereign dominion over all. ' Christ's second coming shall not

(a) 2 Cor. v. 9—11.

(b) Matt. xxv. 31.

(c) Matt. xxv. 46.—2 Thess. i. 8—10.

' be like the former, in meanness and abasement, but with
' power and great glory, with an open discovery of his do-
' minion and greatness,' as a judicious ancient commentator
has explained the text (a). When Christ comes to judg-
ment, the earth, the sea, heaven, and hell shall give up all
that have been dead, at Christ's command; which will make
it evident, that his *kingdom ruleth over all*.

The words *quick* and *dead* signify all persons that ever
were, now are, or shall be; all who die before Christ's se-
cond coming, and all who shall then be found alive. It is
not said that Christ shall judge *some* of the quick and dead,
at his appearing, and the rest a long time after; but my
text joins them all together, in the same judgment, quick
and dead of *all sorts*, both good and bad. The day of
judgment is spoken of as one, and as unknown before-hand;
but it could neither be one, nor unknown, if the saints should
be judged at the beginning of the thousand years, and the
wicked at the end of them; for then, at least when Christ
was once come, the time when the wicked shall be judged
must needs be known before-hand. I must confess, I can-
not see how Christ's being personally a thousand years on
earth can consist with his *ever living in heaven*, to *intercede*
for his people, which requires his bodily presence there:
and to say that earth itself will be heaven, when Christ
comes to dwell here, is to mix and confound all things, and
to suppose that the wicked shall appear in heaven, where
nothing that defiles can enter, in order to be judged. But
without allowing this personal reign, which some are so fond
of, we may and ought to believe a happy and flourishing
state of the church militant, before the end of time; con-
cerning which glorious things are spoken in scripture: but it
is besides my subject and intention to enter upon that point
now. What needs farther explication in the text will be

(a) Κρίναι πότε, ἐν τῇ ἐπιφανίᾳ αὐτοῦ, τῇ μετὰ θόρυβου, τῇ μετὰ θαλάσσης
ἰσχυρῆς λέγει ὅτι, ὅτι αὐτὸς ἔστι ὡς ἰὼν. Chrysost. in loc.

attempted in the management of the following doctrine from it :

Christ shall come again, and in the great day shall judge the whole world, both quick and dead.

In discoursing upon this point, I shall cast my thoughts into the following method.

I. I shall inquire into the *certainty* and *time* of a future judgment, and the *need* of insisting on this doctrine.

II. I shall consider the *person* and *character* of the Judge.

III. I shall specify the *objects* of this judgment ; or shew who, and what shall be judged.

IV. I shall explain the *form* and *process* of it.

V. I shall hint some of its *properties*.

VI. I shall assign some *reasons* of this judgment.

VII. I shall mention some of its *consequents*, and answer some *questions* concerning it. And,

VIII. By way of conclusion, I shall make some *application* of this subject.

I. I shall inquire into the *certainty* and *time* of the future judgment, and the *need* of insisting upon it.

I shall begin with the last branch of this head, as opening the way to the others. The fitness of this doctrine, to be a part of the evangelical ministry, appears from Christ's command to the apostles, after his resurrection, as recited by Peter, in these words, *He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it was he that was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead (a).*—According to their instructions the apostles abundantly insisted on this doctrine ; some received it with pleasure, looking and longing for Christ's appearance, others trembled at the hearing of it : but whether it is liked or disliked, it ought to be preached, and was so very early.—Enoch, the seventh from Adam, preached it, saying, *Behold the Lord comes*

(a) Acts x. 42.

to execute judgment (*a*). The wicked would not believe it, but uttered many hard speeches, not only against the doctrine, but also against the Lord himself, who was to judge them; but yet it was published and insisted on from time to time.—We are told by a good judge (*b*), that this doctrine was the eleventh article of the Jewish creed: It is plain that the apostle (*c*) reckoned it among the first principles and fundamental truths.←Solomon, the wisest preacher among mere men, taught this truth, as a relief against the injustice practised in human courts, when he said, *God shall judge the righteous and the wicked* (*d*): and to curb the voluptuous appetite, when he thus addressed himself to such as are guilty on this head, *Know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment* (*e*).—Long before this, Abraham spoke of God as a Judge (*f*).—And the Psalmist has represented it in very lofty language, *He comes to judge the earth* (*g*).—Job, who lived very early, put his friends in mind, that there is a judgment (*h*).—And to shew the necessity and usefulness of this doctrine under the new-testament dispensation, near the end of the sacred canon, this matter is thus related by the apostle John (*i*); *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 according to the things that were written in those books, according to their works.* Of which I shall have occasion to speak at large hereafter.—Paul told the Athenians of a day in which Christ shall judge the world (*k*); and assured the Corinthians, that *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ* (*l*).—Our blessed Lord spoke of the *end of the world*, when he instituted baptism, to put us in mind of the

(*a*) Jude 14, 15.(*b*) Dr. Owen's expos.—Heb. vi. 1, 2.(*c*) Heb. vi. 1, 2.(*d*) Eccl. iii. 16, 17.(*e*) Eccl. xi. 9.(*f*) Gen. xviii. 25.(*g*) Psalm xcvi. 13.(*h*) Job. xix. 29.(*i*) Rev. xx. 12.(*k*) Acts xvii. 31.(*l*) 2 Cor. v. 10.

general judgment which then will be : and when the apostle Paul spoke of the Lord's supper, he likewise mentioned the *Lord's coming* (a) : and the dreadful curse he uttered against the haters of Christ, is *till the Lord comes* (b) ; and so the persons who are cast out of the church, and die impenitent, pass from the lower judgment to the judgment of the great day : Thus a memento of the final judgment is annexed to these ordinances, that when they are celebrated, this awful and important doctrine may be presented to our thoughts.—If these things are well considered, it will appear that this is no improper or unprofitable doctrine, seeing it is so much insisted on in scripture.

This likewise, in part, shews us the *certainty* of a future judgment, which is the next thing to be spoken to. We are told, that *in the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying, where is the promise of his coming* (c) : These words imply, that this denial of a future judgment had neither been general nor perpetual, but the opinion of some notorious wicked men, who were willing to persuade themselves, that there would be no future judgment, because it was their interest that there should be none. The heathens had some glimmering apprehensions of this judgment, conscience suggesting it to them : hence Felix trembled whilst Paul reasoned concerning it ; hence also sprung their fiction of the infernal judges, the Elysian fields, and the Stygian lake. Conscience was in them the echo of the law, and the harbinger of this judgment, *their thoughts accused, or excused them*, in reference to that future judgment (d). The poet spoke the common sense of mankind, when he said, ‘ no guilty person shall be acquitted, ‘ his own conscience being judge.’ It is also to be observed, that the future judgment is agreeable to the divine perfections. When we rightly conceive of God, we apprehend

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 26.

(b) 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

(c) 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

(d) Rom. ii. 15.

him to be the highest and best of beings, of sovereign power and dominion, of infinite holiness, goodness, and truth ; without these perfections he would be no God, and if they belong to him, thence we may infer the certainty of a future judgment. If God is the highest and best of beings, then he governs the world, and will punish the disobedient ; and will, in order thereto, try and judge them : for the supreme Governor to leave all men to do as they will, without ever calling them to an account, would be at once to quit the government over them. Nor would it be consistent with his infinite wisdom, to threaten the rebellious with punishment, and yet never inflict it : if the punishment was not necessary, equal, and just, why was it ever threatened ? may some say ; and if it was, then not to execute the threatening must be unjust, and the omission of what was equal and necessary, which must be a high reflection on the wisdom, and other perfections of the great Governor of the world. If the omission of the judgment should be owing to a better insight into the nature of things, what becomes of God's omniscience ? if it is supposed to arise from an inability to do as he had threatened, his omnipotency is destroyed ; if it should be imputed to more favourable thoughts of the evil committed, can we defend his holiness ? and if a change of will in God should be the cause of it, surely his veracity and immutability must be denied : Now, as this would be to deny the God that is above, by divesting him of the perfections of his nature, we may conclude, that God will not neglect a work which is so necessary to the stability and glory of his own throne, nor give any one room to say, the Governor of the world doth not what is right and agreeable to the declared excellencies of his nature ; he cannot give men occasion by his keeping silence, always to say, he is altogether such a one as themselves.

God's faithfulness and goodness to his own *people*, prove the certainty of this judgment ; how many of God's dear

servants suffer hard and unjust things from their enemies in this world? and at God's command his servants have left it to him to *avenge their cause* (a); they denied themselves, and taking up their cross, followed Christ, not loving their lives to the death, in hope of that crown of righteousness which the Lord hath promised them: But should there be no future judgment, rewards, or punishments, wherein would the faithfulness and goodness of God to his people appear? How could they be preserved? How could we acquit him from acting the most unkind and deceitful part towards them? But let God be true, though every man be a liar. Christ therefore shall certainly judge the quick and dead.

God's faithfulness, righteousness, and love to his *Son* render this judgment necessary. Christ, more than any man, had endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; many of his implacable enemies went out of this world without receiving a just retribution for their evil deeds. God himself had engaged that they should be punished, and that the judgment should be put into Christ's own hands; and this is to be no small part of Christ's mediatorial honour and glory, to judge the whole world: But on supposition that there never should be such a judgment, how would God be faithful and just to his Son? How would he shew his love to him, or a regard to his glory as Mediator, and as a sufferer for righteousness sake?

It may be said in the particular judgment after death, the sinner receives a sentence and reward according to his works; so Christ is avenged of his enemies, and his glory is provided for. To this it may be replied, that in the particular judgment only one part of the sinner, his soul, comes into judgment, and why should his body, which had been a partner in the sin, be exempted from the condemnation? Besides, this particular judgment is neither so public, nor uni-

(a) James v. 6--8.—Rom. xii, 19.

versal, as Christ's ill usage and honour require. Those alive at the end of time would escape judgment, if the general judgment should never be : should not every knee be brought to bow to Christ, and every tongue be made to confess to him, after he had humbled himself to death for his people, how would the Father's engagements to Christ be performed ?

The righteousness of *God* proves the certainty of this judgment : the apostle thus confirms it (*a*), *It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you that are troubled rest with us, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.* The dispensations of providence are very mysterious ; *There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and their is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness (b) :* It is necessary therefore that there be a future judgment, wherein the saint shall be rewarded, and the sinner punished. It was the belief of this that set the Psalmist Asaph right (*c*), when his feet were almost gone. If no sins were punished in this life, men would be apt to deny a providence ; and if all sins were punished here, they would be ready to think there would be no future judgment ; but seeing some are, and some are not punished in this world, there is reason to believe both a providence, and a judgment to come : *Wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that we may know there is a judgment (d).*

There is yet a clearer and more convincing argument of a future judgment to be drawn from the judgment and sufferings of *Christ* ; that God, who did not spare the sins of his own people, will not spare the sins of others. He that judged and condemned his own Son, for sins only imputed to him, will certainly judge and condemn impenitent sinners

(a) 2 Thes. i. 6, 7.

(b) Eccles. vii. 15.

(c) Psal. lxxiii. 2, 3, 17, 18.

(d) Job xix. 29.

for those sins that are inherent in them, and were never purged away by the blood of Christ. The same holiness, justice, and truth, which moved God to inflict judgment on his own Son, when he stood in the place of the redeemed, will engage him to judge and condemn them who have no sacrifice for their sins.

God has reserved the *fallen angels in everlasting chains, to the judgment of the great day (a)* ; therefore there shall be such a judgment : God has also given us an undeniable evidence of this judgment in Christ's resurrection from the dead ; he received his body from the grave, to qualify him to execute judgment, as the Son of man, as well as for other reasons. Besides, the scriptures abound with testimonies assuring us of a future general judgment ; *The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels ; and then shall he reward every man according to his works. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness : It is appointed for man once to die, and after this comes the judgment. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (b)*. Therefore, from plain express scripture testimony, appears the certainty of a future judgment.

As to the time of it, Christ said, *Of that day and hour knows no man (c)* ; it comes as a thief in the night, secretly and unexpectedly. God has concealed the particular day, that we may wait for it every day. God has revealed the time of several other great events, that men might be convinced of his omniscience and veracity ; but at, or after the day of judgment, there will be no need of such conviction, which may be one reason why the precise time is hid from us. Christ indeed has mentioned the *signs* of his coming, and of the end of the world ; but in such a way, that it is probable none will be able rightly to apply them, till

(a) Jude ver. 6.

(b) Mat. xvi. 27.—Acts xvii. 31.—Heb ix. 27.

(c) Mark xiii. 32.

the time itself draws very near, according to his own words, *When you shall see all those things, know that the time is near, even at the door (a)*. But I shall have occasion hereafter to speak to this more largely.

II. I shall consider the *person* and *character* of the Judge. In my text Christ is said to be *the Judge of the quick and dead*; and elsewhere, he is often spoken of as the Judge; and yet in other places we find it affirmed of God the Father. We read of *Jesus the Mediator (b)*, and *God the Judge of all*; yet it is said, *The Father judges none, but has committed all judgment to the Son (c)*. How are these things consistent? The apostle's words may help us to reconcile them; he has told us, *God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained (d)*. The Father judges the world by the Son; the Father judges no man without the Son, nor personally as the Father, but has committed the administration of the judgment to the Mediator. The supreme judiciary power is in the Godhead; and the exercise of that power is, by dispensation, in the hands of Christ, God-man-mediator: *The Father has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man (e)*—As man, Christ was capable of receiving this power, but not as God; and because the Son of God only assumed human nature, and became the Son of man, therefore the judgment is committed to him. It was proper, and it was designed, that judgment should be executed in a visible manner, in the sight and hearing of men; therefore the Son of God, who assumed our nature, and became man, has this authority given him, because he is the Son of man. A mere creature indeed could not be judge, but he who has both an uncreated and a created nature; or who is both God and man in one person, is qualified to be the Judge,

(a) Mat. xxiv. 33.

(b) Heb. xii. 23.

(c) John v. 22.

(d) Acts xvii. 31.

(e) John v. 27.

both natures acting in this work, according to their properties. As *God*, Christ is infinitely knowing, wise, holy, just, and powerful ; therefore he can neither be blinded, deceived, corrupted, nor resisted. 'To *judge the world in righteousness* must include a just and irrevocable sentence, and the execution of it : to accomplish this, requires those infinite perfections of knowledge, wisdom, holiness, justice, and power ; and he that has these is and must be God, and not a mere creature ; yet it was proper, that he should not only be God, but man, that he may visibly and gloriously appear on the throne of judgment, and openly pronounce sentence upon all. On account of the near union of Christ's humanity with his divine person, it is fit that even the human nature should bear its part in the future judgment : Having the honour of so near a conjunction with the Son of God, it has also the honour to be joined with him in the great work of judging the world.

As Christ's human nature had been condemned, made a sacrifice for sins, and very ill used by men, whilst he was employed in the work of our redemption, God will put an honour upon that nature in and by which he had been so much dishonoured. Seeing judgment is to pass upon men who have flesh as well as spirit, judgment shall pass upon them in such a way as shall be subject, not only to rational perception, but to the very senses of men. Hence Christ's *judging* and *appearing* are joined together in my text ; and elsewhere it is said, *Every eye shall see him, they also that pierced him (a)*. It will be very affecting and terrible to the wicked to see him visibly coming as their judge, in power and great glory, whom they had despised and rejected ; and whom some of them had buffeted, spit upon, and treated with all manner of indignities. How will they be troubled and confounded at his presence ? But it will be very pleasing to the redeemed to see that body, which had once

(a) Rev. i. 7.

been humbled to the dust of death for them, now upon the throne of judgment ; and to hear those lips pronouncing the sentence of life and death upon men, which had so often preached the word of life to them : and particularly to hear him saying, *Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.*—On these accounts the person of the judge is God-man-mediator.

I come next to consider his *qualifications*, or some of the *ingredients* in his character : and seeing we must all be judged by him, it very much concerns us to know what sort of Judge he will be. But here an objection may be thrown in our way, Christ said, *I judge no man ; I came not into the world to judge the world (a).* What need then is there to inquire into Christ's character as Judge, seeing he disclaims the work, and rejects the character ? To this it may be answered, That Christ might say, he *judged no man*, at that present time, or in such a carnal fleshly manner as the Jews did : *He came not into the world to judge the world ;* this was not the primary end and design of his coming, to judge and condemn, but to save men : besides, the cited text speaks of Christ's *first* coming, not of his *second*. Christ came the first time, not to judge, but to be judged : He was then in the form of a servant ; but at his second appearing he will judge the quick and the dead. And for this he is qualified ; as may appear in the following things.

1. He is God's *elect*, in whom he is well pleased (*b*) ; whence we may infer, that he is well qualified for the work, otherwise the infinitely wise and good God would not have chosen him : He would never have entrusted the concerns of his own glory, and of his people's happiness in an insufficient hand.

2. He is an *able* understanding Judge. *He knows all things ; he needs not that any should testify of man, for he knows what is in man (c) :* Hence he judges not after the

(a) John xii. 47. (b) Isa. xlii. 1. (c) John xxi. 17.—ii. 25.

outward appearance, but with righteous judgment (*a*). He is infallible; and therefore there lies no appeal from his judgment. Solomon in a much lower case, says, *Who is able to judge so great a people* (*b*). But Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the God-head bodily, has sufficient abilities to judge the whole world.

3. He is an impartial Judge; he will be no respecter of persons: he may say as the Psalmist Asaph did (*c*), *When I receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly*.—In this world he is merciful; but yet he will by no means clear the guilty: He will not pervert judgment, nor lay on any man more than is meet. Every one shall receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it hath been good or bad (*d*): not only open enemies, but pretended friends, who had not been sincere, shall be rejected and condemned in the judgment of the great day. Though they call Christ *Lord*, and claim favour on the account of former services and acquaintance, yet the impartial Judge will say to them, *Depart from me I know you not: you are workers of iniquity* (*e*).

4. He is a powerful and glorious Judge: he shall come with power and great glory (*f*). There will be no room to question his power, when he re-collects the scattered dust of men's bodies, and rebuilds them, replaces their souls in them, and brings them and all the world to his bar, devils not excepted. Those who derided him on earth will feel the power and weight of his last sentence and judgment.

5. He is a righteous Judge: Because he loved righteousness, he was annointed with the oil of gladness; and as he loved it, so he will exercise it: *He shall judge the world in righteousness* (*g*). It is impossible that one so righteous

(*a*) Isa. xi. 2—5.

(*b*) 1 Kings iii. 9.

(*c*) 1 Pet. i. 17.—Psal. lxxv. 2.—Exod. xxxiv. 7.

(*d*) 2 Cor. v. 20. (*e*) Mat. vii. 22. (*f*) Mat. xxiv. 30,

(*g*) Acts xvii. 31.

as Christ is, in both natures, should pass an unrighteous sentence : this righteousness is essentially requisite in the Judge of the world. *The Judge of all the earth will do right* ; were it otherwise, what multitudes would be eternal sufferers by him ? *Is God unrighteous ?* said the apostle Paul, *how then shall he judge the world (a) ?* but Christ is the righteous Judge : Therefore this is not the case.

6. He will be to many a *terrible* Judge. The apostle Paul, *foreseeing the terror of the Lord persuaded men (b) :* 'There will be no room to call this in question, when *he appears in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and have not obeyed the gospel (c).* This will be the great and terrible day of the Lord : All the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him ; for destruction from the Lord may justly be a terror to them.

7. He will be a peremptory *inflexible* Judge. There will be no revoking or changing his sentence when it is once passed : It is eternal judgment, as the event of it is eternal happiness or misery. Christ's sentence is final and decisive ; there is no higher court to appeal to. All power in heaven and on earth is given to him ; and when once he has passed sentence, he will never alter the thing that is gone out of his lips ; and this makes the judgment very awful : to be condemned then, is to be lost forever without remedy.

8. This Judge is *strong* and *mighty*. He is the mighty God who made and upholds all things, who raised the dead, and can subdue all things to himself (*d*). He has the devils in chains already ; they were subject to his controul, in the days of his infirmity, much more in the day of his glorious power : As it was said of Babylon, so may it be said of the world, *Strong is the Lord God that judges it.*

9. To the saints and holy angels, he will be *most gracious and delightful*. He has found out a way to unite mercy and

(a) 2 Tim. iv. 8.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 11.

(c) 2 Thes. i. 7, 8.

(d) Phil. iii. 11.

truth, righteousness and peace ; and to be just and yet gracious to his people. The sentence of life will be just, because he had purchased the life for his people, and yet it will be gracious, because he freely gives the salvation to them. Well then may the saints be said to *love* the appearance of this Judge ; for, *He will come to be glorified in the saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* And thus we see that Christ is well qualified to be the Judge of quick and dead.—What remains in the doctrinal part, must be deferred till another time ; and, with some application, I shall close this discourse.

APPLICATION.

1. From what has been said, we may learn the *miser*y which they will be in, when the Judge comes, who have not obeyed the gospel : How shall these lift up their heads in judgment, or be able to stand before the tribunal of an injured, slighted, rejected Saviour, who is then their Judge ? In vain will they cry to him for mercy, who had so long offered them mercy, but all in vain : There is no escaping for them that *neglect such great salvation (a)*, and turn away from him that speaks to them from heaven, and will come from thence in flaming fire, to judge and destroy them.

2. What strong *motives* have ministers to be earnest with sinners, and to exhort them to *fly from the wrath to come* ? Some would have us treat them as mere machines ; but God draws them with the bands of a man, and works upon the faculties he has given them. It was Paul's practice, in the views of the awful judgment, to *persuade* men : *Knowing the terror of the Lord he persuaded men (b)* ; that is, as one has explained it *(c)*, ‘ Duly considering what will be
‘ the state of things, with all men in that day, how dread-
‘ ful the Lord Christ will be therein to impenitent sinners,
‘ and what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands

(a) 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 11.

(c) Dr. Owen's expos. Heb. vi. p. 31.

‘ of the living God ! we use all diligence to prevail with men
 ‘ to get such an interest in the peace and reconciliation ten-
 ‘ dered in the gospel, that they may be accounted worthy
 ‘ to stand on that day ; for, if the judgment seat of Christ
 ‘ is not continually in our eye, whatever other motives we
 ‘ may have to diligence, in our work, we shall have little
 ‘ regard to the souls of men, whether they live or die in
 ‘ their sins or no.’

3. From this doctrine we may learn the *greatness* and *glory* of Christ : he is now Lord of all, and hereafter he will be Judge of all ; all the great ones of the earth shall stand at his bar, and have him for their Judge. Our Redeemer is great, and greatly to be praised. God has given him a name above every name, made him a Prince and a Saviour, the supreme Judge of quick and dead. Christians have no reason to be ashamed of their Lord and Master, but a great deal of reason to be displeased with them who would degrade and lessen their exalted Saviour, whose nature and office set him far above the highest creatures.

4. What *comfort* may true believers take in this doctrine ? When the apostle had given the Thessalonians an account of this judgment, as a practical use to be made of it by the saints, he said, *Wherefore, comfort you one another with these words (a)*. A believer that knows his interest in Christ, may be delighted to think, how his dear Saviour will be openly seen, admired, and honoured, in the great day ; and that the redeemed shall then be fully and for ever acquitted from every charge and condemnation, and openly owned and proclaimed heirs of the heavenly glory. How comfortable it is to think in what shining robes of glory the saints shall attend the judge, and appear at his right hand, even such as were not thought fit to live in this world, and could hardly find a den or cave of the earth to hide their persons in, whilst they lived, or when they died. O happy change for

(a) 1 Thess. iv. 18.

the believers ! when Christ comes to judgment, and calls for their bodies out of their dusty beds, and brings their souls from heaven with him, and re-unites them with their bodies, He will plead their cause against all their enemies, and will allot them a place in the heavenly mansions : Happy are the people that are in such a case ; blessed are they who have Christ for their Lord : Such as are now subject to his government shall be hereafter exempted from his condemning sentence ; for, *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (a).*

5. With what *zeal* and *diligence* should ministers preach the word, in season, and out of season ? How should they reprove, rebuke, and exhort men, seeing they must all appear before such a righteous, holy, impartial Judge, whose sentence is for eternity ; and who is able and resolved to execute it upon all (b) ? And with what seriousness and attention should men hear the word, *and use all other means to prepare themselves for the great day* ; being firmly persuaded, that the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom ?



SERMON II.

Preached MAY 7, 1728.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom.—2 TIM. iv. 1.

THE apostle here presses Timothy to preach the word with all diligence, as he would answer it to Christ, who shall judge all men at the great day. The consideration of that

(a) Rom. viii. 1.

(b) Jude 14, 15.

awful judgment should have a great influence upon all of us, ministers and people, in our whole conduct. One of the ancients thought he ever heard those words sounding in his ears, *Arise you dead, and come to judgment.*—In a former discourse, on these words, I have shewed the *certainty* of this judgment, and the *necessity* and *use* of this doctrine ; after which, I proceeded to consider the *person* and *character* of the Judge in several particulars. I now proceed.

III. I shall specify the *objects* of this judgment ; or shew *who*, or *what* shall be judged.

The scriptures speak of it in general and universal terms : Christ shall judge the world, all nations, small and great, quick and dead, the righteous and the wicked ; we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and every one must give an account to God : All mankind that ever were, now are, or ever shall be, without exception of any age, sex, or quality, must be judged in the great day. In this world some are too high to be called to an account, others are thought too low to be taken notice of ; but there are none too great to stand at Christ's bar, nor too mean to appear there : civil distinctions will then cease ; the prince and the peasant will appear before the Judge, as creatures and criminals to be tried and judged, without respect of persons. Those who would never come to the throne of grace, shall be forced to appear before the bar of justice. Death shall be no hinderance ; for death and the grave shall give up their dead, when Christ comes to judgment.

It is said, indeed, that *the wicked shall not stand in judgment (a)* ; from whence some of old, very absurdly inferred, that the wicked should not be judged : but it is one thing not to *be* judged, and another thing not to *stand* in judgment ; this is to be cast and condemned in judgment, which supposes a judgment to come. It is said, that *he that believes shall not come into condemnation (b)* ; and

(a) Psalm ii. 5.

(b) John v. 24.

therefore, as some think, shall not be judged : and thus between these two opinions, the objects of the future judgment are almost wholly lost, and the judgment itself is in a manner denied.

It has been pleaded by some of the ancients, such as Hilary and others (*a*), that judgment takes place only in doubtful cases ; and therefore the openly wicked, and those evidently good, shall not be judged, but only such concerning whom the matter is not plain : but it is very surprising that such men could speak so contrary to plain texts of scripture, which tells us, that *God will judge both the righteous and the wicked* (*b*) : this is spoken without restriction ; and what warrant have men to make exceptions, where God has made none ? *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad* (*c*),

It is a question among some, whether such as die in infancy shall be judged in the great day ; the scripture says, that *small and great shall stand before God and be judged* (*d*). If infants have rational souls, and are subject to eternal rewards and punishments, sure then they must be liable to be judged in the great day : And it seems contrary to reason, and the end of creation, to suppose that God should put an immortal soul into a body, only to sleep here a few days on earth, or for ever in the world to come, which would seem to be a making them in vain and to no purpose.

Some are very confident, that the *good angels* shall be judged ; but, as the scriptures speak nothing of it, I shall pay no regard to that opinion : but as to the *evil angels* it is very plain (*e*), that they are *reserved to the judgment of*

(*a*) In Psalm i. 5. p. 651. Vide Gerh. T. 9. p. 82, 83.

(*b*) Eccl. iii. 17.

(*c*) 2 Cor. v. 10.

(*d*) Rev. xx. 12.

) The ministries and offices of the former, (*i. e.* of the good angels) shall come under examination, that they may receive due

the great day (a) ; then they must answer not only for their first apostacy, but for all their sins since. The devil sins from the beginning ; and therefore shall be judged for all he hath done from the beginning. Thus it appears who or what persons shall be judged.

There is one thing more to be considered under this head, that is, whether all the actions of all men shall be discovered and tried, in the day of judgment. Divines are divided in their sentiments on this point : that the saints shall not come into the judgment of condemnation is generally agreed ; but yet many (*b*) think that their evil, as well as their good

commendation ; for those fore-mentioned words, in 1 Cor. vi. 3. seem to include these. Dr. Edwards Theolog. Refor. vol. I. page 454.

I need not say much more of the absolution which appertains to the good angels ; that these shall be judged hath been shewn already ; and it is most undeniable, because we have it from the pen of the infallible apostle, (as we have heard before) that holy men at the last day shall judge angels : he speaks in general, and therefore both good and evil ones must be judged. *Id.* 456.

(*a*) 2 Pet. ii. 4.—Jude 5, 6.

(*b*) I know it is doubted by some, whether at the last judgment the sins of the saints shall come into the judgment of discussion and discovery : Scripture seems to many most to favour the affirmative ; but that they shall escape the judgment of condemnation, it is not doubted. Jenkyn on Jude, p. 244.

Ad Judicii illius objectum pertinent etiam omnes omnium, tam bonorum, quam malorum, hominum actus, tum boni, tum mali. —Non excipiuntur peccata piorum, quorum remissionem per Christum adepti fuerint, quæ tunc etiam manifestabuntur ; ita tamen ut ipsis nullam confusionem afferant, sed potius gaudium immensum, ex eo quod propter tot peccata remissa, tanta erga eos apparebit clementiæ diviniæ magnitudo. Synops. purioris Theologiæ, p. 799.

I cannot say absolutely, that their (*i. e.* the saints) sins shall not be mentioned at all, for Acts iii. 19. it is said, *Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.* Certainly not to their trouble and confusion, possibly not particularly. Manton on Mat. xxv. p. 176.

actions, shall be made manifest in that day; and several scriptures seem to favour the opinion (a). It is said, that *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* That men shall give an account of every idle word in the day of judgment: that *God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, and manifest the counsels of the heart:* But when the scripture says, that *God will bring every work into judgment, whether it is good or evil;* this may be taken distributively, or collectively, for every good work of the saints, or every evil work of the sinner. This sense will preserve the truth of the general or universal terms, without supposing that all the sins of all the saints shall be laid open in the day of judgment. In Christ's account of the future judgment (b), not the least notice is taken of the sins of believers, but only those good works which evidence the truth of their faith; and Christ's representation of the process of the final judgment, may go a great way, in determining our thoughts as to this matter. All particular passages relating to the future account must be interpreted, in a consistency with Christ's own declaration concerning it. 'The sins of the faithful shall not be brought into judgment, says a learned and judicious writer (c); for being in this life covered, and taken away, by a sentence of justification, and seeing the last judgment shall be a confirmation and manifestation of the same sentence, it is not at all likely that they should then be brought to light.'

As to unbelievers, they are, in the great day, to receive

(a) Eccles. xii. 14.—Matth. xii. 36.—Rom. ii. 16.—1 Cor. iv. 5.

(b) Matth. xxv.

(c) Hinc peccata fidelium non prodibunt in judicium: quum enim, in isthac vitâ, per sententiam justificationis, tecta sunt, et ablata, et ultimum illud judicium confirmatio erit et manifestatio ejusdem sententiæ, non esset consentaneum ut in lucem denuo tum temporis proferantur. Amessi medull. l. 1. p. 323.

the *wages of their sins* (a), the full and proper demerit of their evil works : and Christ will convince them of all their *hard speeches*, and of all their *ungodly deeds* ; and therefore it is necessary, that their sins should be brought into judgment : but there doth not appear to be the same reason of bringing to light, all the sins of the saints, because their trial and sentence proceeds upon a different ground, upon what Christ has done and suffered for them, on the account of which their sins are blotted out, and they have a sentence of life and happiness passed upon them. Christ has advised his people to *buy of him white raiment, that the shame of their nakedness may not appear* (b) ; and shall this shame appear, after they are thus clothed ? shall the church be presented, in that day by Christ, *without spot* (c) ; and yet will he expose all her spots to public view ? Is not Christ's merit a sufficient covering, to hide all his people's sins ? Christ's satisfaction takes away the charge of guilt ; his obedience answers the demand of righteousness ; and so the believer will stand *rectus in curia*, blameless in court. Christ having taken away the *hand-writing that was against us* (d), all the curse and condemnation, there remains no foundation to build a charge upon ; for, *where there is no law, there is no transgression* ; and consequently, no room for a charge or accusation. The infinite grace which justifies the believer, and the infinite merit for the sake of which he is justified, overflows and swallows up all his sins ; hence when they are *sought for they shall not be found* (e). Has God said, all the transgressions that he hath committed, shall not be mentioned to him (f) ; and yet will he himself make a repetition of them, before the whole world ? If God doth not impute sin to his people in this world, why should he proclaim it in another ? Hath he said, *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more* ? and will he, after this, re-

(a) Jude 15.

(b) Rev. iii. 17.

(c) Eph. v. 27.

(d) Col. ii. 14.

(e) Jer. l. 26.

(f) Zech. viii. 27.

vive the memory of them, in the most public manner? This seems very disagreeable to the state both of the souls and bodies of Christians, in that day; their souls will then appear before God, without the least spot of sin; and as to the far greatest part of them, they had long since passed their trial, and private judgment, in which they had been fully absolved; and shall their sins, after this, be called over again? Their bodies also shall appear holy and glorious, at Christ's right hand; and is it not hard to suppose, that, after such testimonies of divine love and approbation, he should rip up all their faults, and make them a spectacle to evil angels and wicked men? Should Christ, in the great day, permit the accusation against his people which he blotted out, and nailed to his cross, to be revived and read over again, it would look as if he had repented him of his performances; gone counter to the design of his cross, and permitted the sufficiency of his merits, as well as of his love, to be called in question.

It may be alledged, that this bringing the sins of the saints into judgment, will be a discovery of Christ's omniscience and righteousness: to which it may be replied, that these perfections will appear, in the examination and sentence of the wicked, and also in bringing to light the faith and holiness of the saints in that day, as well as in revealing and following the counsels of God, which Christ has such a regard to in those words, *Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world*: q. d. My Father, in infinite love, has appointed you to possess the kingdom from eternity; it was designed for you, and now I call you actually to inherit and enjoy it.

It has been objected, that to suppose that the sins of the saints shall not be brought into judgment, would open a gap to licentiousness, and encourage persons to sin. To which I answer, that they who are most likely to make that wick-

ed use of it, are those whose sins will be thoroughly searched and exposed to public view, even hypocrites and wicked men : but as for true believers, the inward principle of grace teaches them to *deny all ungodliness* ; and why should not the absolution of the sins of the saints, in the great day, as much encourage sin, as the concealing them ? yet I think it is allowed, that a public sentence of absolution shall then pass upon all the saved.

If it be said, every one must give an account of himself to God, it is allowed ; but it is not said, that it shall be to man too. God knows the heart, and the thoughts afar off.

It may be urged, that Christ, the righteous Judge, will not acquit any before his cause is fully heard and known, which may readily be granted, without any injury to the opinion now advanced ; for the Christian's cause is sufficiently heard and known, when there is practical evidence produced, that he is a true believer : his faith is proved by his works, and so his right to eternal life appears, according to the will of God, that every one that believes should have everlasting life ; so that Christ in passing a sentence of eternal life upon him doth not act unrighteously, or without knowing the cause, though he does not set all his sins in the view of the world.

If it be further urged, that the glory of God's grace and mercy seems to be best provided for, in first bringing all the saints sins to public view, and then absolving their persons from them :—It may be answered, that their sins may be set forth as exceeding great and many, without entering into particulars ; and the burying them all in oblivion, so as they shall be remembered no more, seems, at least to me, most highly to advance the glory of divine grace and mercy, which reigns in such a sovereign manner through righteousness, to eternal life.

If any should say, why may not the discovery of the sins of saints in the great day, be useful, as well as it is at pre-

sent : this will admit of an easy answer, for there are many good purposes to which such a discovery may serve at present, which can have no place in the great day ; such as the humiliation of offenders, the caution and warning of other Christians, the public evidence of the need of Christ, and of the promises and ordinances of the gospel ; as also to try the faith, and exercise the watchfulness of fellow-christians : but these things belong not to the day of judgment ; and therefore there is not the same reason for their discovery then, as there is for it in this world.

After all, I would only desire the arguments made use of, may be seriously considered, and then be admitted or rejected, as they shall appear consonant to scripture and reason, or not. I shall close this, with the words of two very learned divines of our own, ‘ Whether all the saints’ sins shall be then called over, and made known to others, seeing they are known to him, who is more in himself, and more to us, than all the world besides, I question. The elect shall not have their sins, for which Christ satisfied, but only their good works remembered (a).’

This leads me to speak something of the *notice* which shall be taken of the good works of the saints, in the day of judgment, with the *design* and *end* thereof. The good works of the saints shall be produced, in that day, not only as the evidences of their faith, but also as the rule of the reward of grace, which they shall then receive. This reward is not deserved by their works, but is the free gift of God : when they had done their best, they were unprofitable servants ; but yet God has been pleased so to order it, that the reward shall be proportioned to their works (b). Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own works ; great is their reward in heaven, who suffer for

(a) Dr. Owen Expos. Heb. vi. 1, 2. p. 27. Usher’s Substance of the Christian religion, p. 448.

(b) 1 Cor. iii. 8.

Christ's name's sake and the gospel (a). The scripture speaks of a prophet's reward (b), a righteous man's reward, and the reward of him that giveth a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple. *God is not unrighteous, to forget his people's work and labour of love, which they have shewed to his name* (c). The following words are very clear and full to our purpose, *The nations were angry, and thy wrath was come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give rewards to thy servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, small and great* (d). Christ himself has expressly said, that *the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels*, and then shall he reward every man according to his works (e) : and it is laid down as a certain rule, in scripture, that he that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly ; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. A learned commentator on those words (f), (*God is not unrighteous, to forget your works of faith,*) says, ' respect may herein be had to the future and ' final reward of the faith, love, and works of believers, for ' this also belongs to God's covenant, and it is so of grace as ' that the righteousness of God, can be no other than that ' of his faithfulness in his promises ; for neither we nor our ' works are capable of an eternal reward, by way of merit.' Upon the whole it appears, that there is a reward of grace which shall be given in the great day, according to the works of believers ; and that therefore it will be necessary for these good works to be then set in an open light, that all may see the suitableness of that reward of grace, that *every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad* (g).

(a) Mat. v. 11, 12. (b) Mat. x. 41, 42. (c) Heb. vi. 10.

(d) Rev. xi. 18. (e) Mat. xvi. 27. (f) Dr. Owen in loc.

(g) 2 Cor. v. 10.

I now proceed to the next general head.

IV. I shall explain the *form* and *process* of the judgment : and here,

1. We may inquire briefly into the *preparations* for the judgment, which will be managed with the greatest regularity and order, becoming the greatness of the Judge, and of the work he shall come about. Christ is said to be *ready*, that is, prepared, *to judge the quick and dead* (a) : He has assumed our nature, in which he will visibly appear, which is one preparative for this judgment : He is invested in his office, as Lord and Judge ; *the Father has committed all judgment to the Son* (b) : He is qualified with all the requisites for it, infinite wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, authority, and power ; he is ascended up into his throne, as Lord of lords, and King of kings. The time, manner, and objects of the judgment are already settled and fixed ; the day is appointed, and not uncertain in itself, though unknown to us : It is resolved that the judgment shall be in righteousness ; in order to it, a register, and a record is kept of the actions of men ; as at a petty sessions in a country, presentments are made, and bills presented and found for the general assize : so there is a twofold record kept of men's actions in the book of conscience, and in the book of God's omniscience, in order to the general judgment, at which time these books shall be opened. These things are done already.

There are other things which shall be done, by way of preparation for it, in a proper time and order ; one of which will be the *sign of the Son of man* (c), which shall be seen in the heavens. Some think this will be the visible appearance of Christ himself ; but it seems very harsh and improper to say, that his appearing shall be the *sign* of his appearing. The scripture says, *Then shall they see the sign of the Son of man in the heavens : and they shall see*

(a) 1 Pet. iv. 5.

(b) John v. 22.

(c) Mat. xxiv. 30.

the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. The *sign of the Son of man*, and the *coming of the Son of man*, are spoken of as two distinct things ; the sign goes before Christ's appearance, and therefore cannot be that appearance itself, for then the thing must be before itself. Some take the sign to be some glorious standard and ensign of the approaching Judge, and of his host that shall come with him : Whether it shall be any shining brightness in the heavens, or any particular figure or form of the approaching Judge and judgment, we need not, as we cannot determine ; this, I think, is enough for us to know, that it will be something visible to all, and a convincing evidence of the Judge's near approach. Hence one of the evangelists, having spoken of this *sign (a)*, immediately has added, that *all the tribes of the earth shall mourn*, being struck with an apprehension of the Judge's near approach, and with their own guiltiness. This universal mourning, at the sight of the *sign of the Son of man*, shews that it relates not to the destruction of Jerusalem, which did not occasion such universal grief, but it is the forerunner of the general judgment : in order whereto, the next thing will be the appearance of Christ himself, and his coming in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory ; of which more hereafter.

Other preparatives, for the passing sentence, will be the setting the judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the gathering of all those who had been dead, and of all those who died not, but shall be changed, together with the fallen angels, before Christ's judgment-seat : The next thing in order to the judgment, will be the separation of the sheep from the goats, and the placing the former at Christ's right hand (*b*), and the latter at his left hand. And seeing the devils are reserved in chains, to the judgment of this great

(a) Mat. xxiv. 30.

(b) Mat. xxv. 32, 33.

day, there is no room to question their being compelled to attend the tribunal of Christ; for, *at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to him; of things in heaven, or all the blessed above; and of things in the earth, or all that shall be living on the earth, when Christ comes; and of things under the earth (a), of devils, and all the miserable departed spirits, that then shall be found in the infernal prison of hell: That is, as some of the ancients explain it, the whole world, angels, men, and devils, shall be brought to own, that Christ is Lord and God. This shall be done in the great day, according to the apostle Paul, who has said, We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: for it was written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God (b).* Having thus hinted some of the preparations for this judgment, the next thing will be,

2. To consider the *manner* of the Judge's appearing, as a thing that will be very remarkable and extraordinary; and so it will be on many accounts: It will be a real local visible descent from heaven, as the angels declared, *The same Jesus, which is taken from you, into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as you have seen him go up into heaven (c).* He shall come in that glorious body in which he ascended, sitting upon a cloud, when he descends, as he did when he ascended. As he visibly ascended, so he shall visibly descend; and, as one of the ancients notes (*d*), he shall come with greater glory, than he ascended with; and it will be much more wonderful, to see him descend, than it was to see him ascend, from earth to heaven; for his descent will be with a numerous and honourable retinue, becoming the dignity of his person, and of his office as Lord and Judge

(a) Phil. ii. 11.

(b) Rom. xiv. 10, 11.

(c) Acts i. 11.

(d) Μετὰ γὰρ πλείονος ἤκει δόξης, πλὴν οὕτω μετὰ νεφέλης, οὕτω μετὰ σώματος, καὶ πολλῶ θαυμασιώτερον ἰδεῖν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνοντα ἢ ὅτε γῆς ἀναβαίνοντα. Chrysost. in loc.

of all. Thus the patriarch Enoch prophesied of him (a), *Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.* The spirits of the just made perfect shall attend in this judiciary circuit ; and shall receive their glorified bodies, which will, when all are together, make a shining part of Christ's retinue.

The holy angels will appear then in their richest robes of glory (b), such as will be proper on so great an occasion ; on the account of their splendor and brightness, I conceive it is said, that Christ shall come in the *glory of the holy angels* : they shall then all of them wait upon him ; not a saint or angel shall be left in heaven, but all, and every one, shall attend the Judge. Now, if the saints shall each one shine as the sun, if the angels shall appear in such dazling brightness, and if the number of them altogether be so exceeding great, what will be the glory of this procession ? what tongue can utter it, what thoughts can reach it ? ' It is ' likely, says one, the angels will put on some visible shape, ' for the greater glory and majesty of Christ's appearing ; ' for, as he will appear in a body, upon a glorious throne, ' so will his legions round about him, whose order, power, ' and formidable hosts must some way or other be seen of ' the wicked for their greater terror (c).' Public ministers of justice are made formidable by their attendance ; and Christ will come, as a royal King, in the midst of his nobles. At Christ's resurrection, *the angel's countenance was as lightening, and his raiment white as snow ; and for fear of him, the keepers shook, and became as dead men (d)* : what an appearance then must an innumerable company of them, in their brightest glory make ?

These glorious creatures will be employed in a glorious work, the gathering together the elect from the several parts of the world, to attend their Lord : this will be an honour.

(a) Jude 14.

(b) Luke ix. 26.

(c) Dr. Manton on Mat. xxv. p. 153.

(d) Mat. xxviii. 34.

able and easy conveyance, and will add to the glory and splendor of Christ's appearance, which will be with great power ; not only with a great authority, to which all ought to yield, but also with a puissance and strength, able to subdue all things to himself. There is no doubt but that those who, in this world, break his bands, and cast his cords from them, and will not have him to rule over them, will be of the same mind another day ; and were it in their power, would keep as far from the bar of justice, as they had done from the throne of grace : they will be angry, that he should come to judge them, whom they had judged, condemned, and persecuted, whose person, laws, and government they hated : but however the Judge will bring them before his bar, not one shall be able to refuse his summons, or make his escape ; nor will all of them, with their united craft and force, be able to secure themselves from his power : they will easily conclude that there is no withstanding that power, which raises the dead, and forces the legions of hell to appear, with their prisoners, before his bar. At the Judge's appearing they will be convinced of the greatness of his power, and of the truth of that declaration of it, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plague ; O grave, I will be thy destruction (a) !* What they shall then see, and hear, and feel in themselves, will make them sufficiently sensible of the superior infinite power of the Judge. Hence the kings of the earth, and the great mighty men are brought in saying, *The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand (b) ?* They shall see the *Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power (c) :* the first sight will convince them, how invincible the Judge is ; and therefore they will be for immediately hiding themselves from his presence, seeing they find themselves too weak to oppose him.

(a) Hosea xiii. 14.

(b) Rev. vi. 15, 16.

(c) Mark xiii. 26.

There will be an *awful glory*, attending the advent of the Judge: the scriptures represent it in magnificent language (*a*), as the *glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ*. There is a threefold glory, in which Christ shall then appear; the *glory of the holy angels, his own glory, and the glory of his Father* (*b*). The glory of the *angels* was spoke of before; of *Christ's own glory* we may now take a distant view; but who can declare or fully conceive of it? The glory of his *humanity* will be inexpressibly great: when he appeared to Paul, it was in a light above that of the sun, which struck him blind; John fell at his feet as dead upon a like appearance (*c*): And when he comes in the great day, we are not to think it will be with less, but far greater splendor and glory. But who knows what that glory of the Father is, or Christ's own glory as God, in which he will then appear? when he appeared at Sinai, *the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, so terrible was the sight, that Moses exceedingly feared and quaked*; and the people said, *Let not God speak with us, lest we die* (*d*): If such things attended the giving of the law, what will attend the execution of it? The throne of judgment will be like a fiery flame, and a fiery stream will issue and come forth from before him. The apostle's account of Christ's coming to judgment is, that *he will come in flaming fire* (*e*): his enemies fell backward, when he let out but a small ray of his Deity upon them, when they came to apprehend him; what then will they do, when the glory and terror of the divine Majesty shall appear, in the face of the Judge with the brightest lustre? The heavens and the earth are said to *fly away from his face*; and what but his almighty power could retain and uphold the wicked in his presence? The great shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trum-

(*a*) Tit. ii. 13.(*b*) Luke ix. 26.(*c*) Acts ix. 3, 8.—Rev. i. 13. (*d*) Exod. xiv. 17.(*e*) 2 Thess. i. 9.

pet of God will add to the terror and glory of that awful day, as will hereafter appear more fully.

When Christ comes to judgment, he will appear in *royal dignity and authority*: every knee shall bow to him? not in derision, as it was when he died, but with the greatest awe and fear: Every tongue shall confess his sovereignty; not with contempt, but with deep conviction, in that day when they see the King upon the throne of judgment.—Hence in the representation of the future judgment, Christ is called *the King sitting upon the throne of his glory*(a): there will be a great white throne, upon which the King will then appear; his kingly power will be disputed by none, who shall see the royal robes in which he comes, the crown of glory upon his head, and his present guards, and the execution of his sovereign commands, and heaven, earth, and hell, all obeying his authority. There will be no need of miracles, to prove the divinity of his person, or to manifest his sovereign power, for it will be evident to all; and what they shall see and feel will abundantly convince them.

I will add but one thing more, as to the manner of Christ's coming; that it will be very *sudden and surprising*: hence it is compared to the *flashing out of lightening* (b). One of the ancients represents Christ saying, 'I shall not be hid in a manger, and walk up and down in obscurity, as I did thirty years, at my first coming; but I shall come in all my glory, breaking forth in a moment, with all my angels attending me'(c).' Christ's coming to judgment as by himself, compared to the *coming of a thief* (d): he will come very secretly and suddenly, in such an hour as men think not of. Christ's last words which he spoke to us in

(a) Mat. xxv. 34, 40.—Rev. xx. 11. (b) Luke xvii. 24.

(c) Οὐ γὰρ ὥσπερ πρότερον, ἐν φάτιῃ καὶ πτωχείᾳ διὰ τριάκοντα ἔτη, ἰφάνην, οὕτω καὶ τότε, ἀλλὰ πάντα ἐν δόξῃ θεοφοροῦντων ἀγγέλων, καὶ ἐμπαῖ. Theophyl. on Luke xvii. 24.

(d) Rev. xxi. 15, 16.—1 Thea. v. 2.

the new testament were, *Behold I come quickly (a)*. What a surprize will it be to the epicure and atheist, and indeed to many Christians, who will be too deeply plunged in the cares or pleasures of this world, to find, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the Judge descending, and all their worldly cares and delights at an end at once? The trumpet sounds, and the judgment breaks upon them, in a moment. Having thus described the preparations for this judgment, and the manner of the Judge's appearing, I come now,

3. To speak of the *solemnity and greatness* of that day and work. It is called *the terror of the Lord (b)*. The psalmist, by the spirit of prophecy, said, *Our God shall come; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him: he shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people; and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is judge himself (c)*. Accordingly the apostle Paul has represented it in most awful terms. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power (d)*. Though it is easy to find many stupid hearers, yet there will be no unconcerned spectators of this awful event; *all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: then shall the wicked, the greatest and stoutest of them, call to the rocks and to the mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb (e)*; desiring rather not to be, than to be brought before his dreadful tribunal. Whatever sinners now think, they will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, to appear before a slighted provoked Judge, armed

(a) Rev. xxii. 20.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 11.—Jude 6.

(c) Psal. l. 3—6.

(d) 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

(e) Rev. i. 17.—Ch. vi. 15—17.

with power and vengeance. Men think it a matter of great importance, to have a decisive trial for their whole estate, and much more for their lives ; but what is either of these, compared with the eternal judgment ? what is the terror of an earthly judge, or the awe of an human tribunal, to the terrors of Christ, and his judgment-seat ? O the vast assembly, that will make up that court, the dreadful shriek that will attend his condemning sentence, and the confusion and horror that will then fill the condemned criminals ! When they hear of the everlasting curse and fire, which they must endure, with the devil and his angels, there will be no amusement to take off their thoughts from these things. The devil himself will not be at leisure, to tempt or divert them, he will have enough to do to receive his own sentence, and drag them from the bar to execution.

There will be no avoiding or escaping from this judgment, no deceiving or bribing the Judge ; the sentence will be irrevocable, and must be executed ; the execution will last to eternity, and fill the whole person, soul and body, with the greatest misery : This is the portion of a wicked man from his Judge ; and does not this make the final judgment an awful day, and a solemn work ? ‘ As often, says one (*a*), ‘ as I consider that day, my whole body trembles ; whether ‘ I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I think I have ever ‘ in my ear the sound of that terrible trumpet, *Arise you ‘ dead and come to judgment.*’ Paul fell at Christ’s feet, when he came to convert him ; what then will sinners do when he comes to confound them ? Job said of the wicked, that if one knew them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death ; what then will it be for them to have all their secret wickedness made manifest in the great day ? Did a heathen governor tremble at the hearing of this judgment ; and will there be any unmoved at the judgment itself when it comes ? Such a judge never was seen before, such a court

was never known, such a sentence was never passed, such effects of judgment given were never felt, as will then be. 'Who, saith one (a), can imagine the greatness of that day, wherein the Judge will be attended with so many millions of servants; every one of whom shall have a light very more bright and glorious than the sun; the splendor of this appearance at the great day, will surpass that of the greatest kings and judges in the world.' The Alexanders and the Cæsars, who made the earth to tremble, shall stand trembling before the bar of Christ, in the great day. Paul has described it with awful solemnity, in those words. *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the arch angel, and with the trumpet of God (b).* Other kings judge by their delegates, but Christ comes in person, and that not with silence, as he went to the cross, but with a shout, a shout of victory and triumph over all his own and his people's enemies: there will be the united shout of the heavenly host. '*Behold the Lord comes*, will be heard from one end of the heavens to the other; the earth, and the sea, and hell itself shall hear and tremble (c):' There will be the voice of the arch-angel, the chief of the heavenly host, proclaiming the Lord's coming, or as one of the ancients thinks, exhorting the other angels to do their office, and gather the world together before the judgment-seat. The trumpet of God, whatsoever it shall be, may be looked upon as still more awful and affecting; if the trumpet at Sinai shook the earth, shall not that at the great day shake and open heaven, earth, and hell, and call before the judgment-seat, those who had been reserved there for this day? 'What fear will invade then such as are alive upon the earth at that day, when the heavens shall be moved, and the earth dissolved, the trumpet sounding, that of the arch-angel louder than the rest?'

(a) Jenkin on Jude p. 249.

(b) 1 Thes. iv. 16.

(c) Case's Pisgah, p. 81.

‘ When the King himself, who is God, shall appear, what spirit will be left in man? Have we not seen men almost dead with fear of the execution they were going to; and if corporal death does so terrify them, how may eternal death affect them? It cannot, it cannot, believe it, be declared by words, says Chrysostom (*a*), how much we shall be affected.’

Thus I have endeavoured to represent the greatness and solemnity of that day and work: I shall finish now this discourse with one general word of

APPLICATION.

From what has been said, we may learn what different impressions these things may make upon different men: As for unbelievers, who know not God, and have not obeyed the gospel, with what conviction and concern may it fill them when they think of their future and final doom? And how should they be excited, to fly from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on the hope set before them, dreading the thoughts of waking to everlasting shame, contempt, and damnation in the great day? But true believers may look and long for Christ's coming, to such it may be said, *Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust* (*b*). It will be a day of gladness and triumph to the saints; the Judge is their friend; he comes to receive them to himself, that they may be for ever with him in glory: The terrors and misery of

(*a*) Ποῖος ἄρα τρόμος ἔξει, ποῖος φόβος ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπομένοντας; — ὅταν τὴν γῆν ἀναῤῥηγνυμένην ἴδωμεν ὅταν τῶν σαλπύγγων ἀκούσωμεν, ὅταν τῆς φωνῆς τῆς Ἀρχαγγέλου πάσης σάλπιγγος λαμπροτέρας οὐσῆς, ὅταν τὸν οὐρανὸν συνανελκόμενον, ὁ τὰν αὐτὸν παραγινόμενον τὸν ἀπάντων βασιλεὺς Θεὸς, τίς ἄρα ἡμῖν ἔσται ἡ ψυχὴ; — ἴδετε πότε τοὺς ἀπαγομένους τὸν ἐπὶ θάνατον, ποῖαν νομίζετε αὐτοῖς ἦναι τὴν ψυχὴν; — εἰ τοίνυν σαματικὸς θάνατος οὕτω ἡμᾶς φοβεῖ, ὅταν αἰώνιος παραγίνηται, τί πεισόμεθα; — οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐκ ἔστι, πιστεύσατε παρασῆσαι λογὴ τὸ πάθος. Chrysost. in 1 Thess. iv. 16.

(*b*) Isa. xxvi. 19.

that day will be great to many, but to them it will be a good day ; they are to be persuaded that Christ is able to keep what they have committed to his trust, and that they shall find the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life : This is the blessed hope they are to look for ; they may trust and not be afraid, even in the prospect of Christ's judging the quick and dead, at his appearance, and his kingdom.

SERMON III.

Preached JULY 16, 1728.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom.—2 TIM. iv. 1.

THE glorious displays of Christ's perfections, which will attend his judging the world in righteousness, made the apostle insist so much upon this doctrine ; and for the same reason, which at the close of the sacred canon, Christ said, *Surely I come quickly ; the church answers, Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.* The day of Christ's kingly glory will be the day of the saints transcendent joy ; therefore they love and long for his appearing : On these accounts, as well as with regard to the practical use which is to be made of it, this subject may be very grateful to us. I have formerly inquired into the *certainty* of this judgment, the *character* of the Judge, the *objects* of this judgment, and have, in part, explained the *form* and *process* of it. On this head I hinted the *preparations* for it, the *manner* of Christ's appearing, and the great *solemnity* of that day and work. I now proceed,

4. To consider the *rule* and *law* by which men shall be

tried and judged. We are informed, that *as many as sinned without law, shall perish without law; but as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law (a).*—Those who are said to *sin without law*, are such as lived not under the ceremonial law, or the Gentiles. The Jews had this law, and sinned in and under it, and shall be judged by it, together with that revelation of Christ, which they enjoyed; therefore our Lord told them, *There is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom you trust: For, had you believed Moses you would have believed me, for he wrote of me (b).* The rule whereby all men shall be judged, is the law of their obedience made known to them. The Gentiles, who lived before the coming of Christ, shall be judged by the law of nature, which all of them have openly transgressed (c): The Jews of the same time must be judged by the law, and the light into redemption from sin super-added thereunto; or by the rule, doctrine, promises, and precepts of the law and the prophets. The *gospel* will be that by which all men, to whom it has been offered and preached, will be judged (d). ‘The rule of judgment at the last day neither is, nor shall be any other but what is preached every day in the dispensation of the gospel,’ says a learned writer (e). When the scripture speaks of man’s *perishing without law*, it says not a word of his being *saved without law*: It has not distinguished between some that more grossly sinned against the light of nature, and so perished; and others walking up to that light, who should be saved: but the apostle affirms of them universally, that *as many as sinned without law, shall perish without law*. If indeed any could be found, who had exactly fulfilled the law of nature, they might be saved, notwithstanding any thing affirmed here, by the apostle: But if his words are true, no sinner can be saved by the law, or light of nature,

(a) Rom. ii. 12. (b) John x. 45, 46. (c) Rom. ii. 12—14.

(d) Rom. ii. 13. (e) Dr. Owen’s expos. on Heb. vi. 6. p. 27.

which he calls the law written in their hearts. It is upon this supposition that the law of nature condemns every one that continues not in all things written therein, to do them ; that the apostle affirms, that *as many as sinned without law, shall perish without law* : As for those who enjoy the gospel, the rule is, *He that believes shall be saved ; he that believes not shall be damned* (a). According to these rules we find Christ conducting himself, in the judgment of the great day ; *he comes in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God ; or who did not like to retain God in their knowledge, nor glorified him as God* (b) : when in the visible things of the creation, he had discovered his eternal power and Godhead to them, they were not thankful to him, but worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator ; so that by the law they were under they will be found to be without excuse : The passage I now refer to plainly shews the case of the Gentile world, and gives us light into the other passage, which speaks of Christ's coming in *flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God* (c).—Another sort that will fall under his vengeance, in that day, are such as had enjoyed, but not obeyed the gospel ; such as had despised and rejected Christ, therein exhibited to them ; these Christ has told us, shall be judged in the great day, by the word which he hath spoke. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil* (d).

John in his Revelation tells us (e), that he saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which was the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. We have here a description of the last judgment, according

(a) Mark xvi. 16.

(b) 2 Thes. i. 7.—Rom. i. 18—21, 25.

(c) John xii. 48.

(d) John iii. 19.

(e) Rev. xx. 12.

to the manner of proceeding in human courts of judicature : not, as I suppose, to signify that the former shall exactly resemble the latter ; but to teach us, that all things in the future judgment shall be managed with order, knowledge, and righteousness, according to the laws, which the persons judged had lived under, and according to the works they had done, in conformity, or contradiction to those laws. The books which shall be opened, and made use of, in the judgment of the great day, we may suppose to be the book of God's remembrance, the book of conscience, the book of the law, the book of the gospel, and the book of life : The books of the law, natural and written, and of the gospel, are the rule by which men shall be judged ; the books of God's remembrance and of conscience will be the evidence of the state and actions of men. The judgment is said to pass according to men's works, not according to their faith or belief ; the reason of which may be, because their works are the certain evidences, or fruits of their faith or belief to others. Though the omniscient Judge does not need such discoveries, yet by-standers are this way to be made sensible of the justice and equity of the sentence that shall be passed (a) : And for this reason ministers also must give an account of their people ; and it may be the good angels shall give an account of ministers : wherefore Paul charged Timothy before the elect angels (b), to do his duty. It is the opinion of some, that the wicked, though convicted in conscience, will deny the charge, or endeavour to evade it, saying, *Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, and did not minister to thee* (c) ? And that they will plead their good deeds, *We have pro hesied and cast out devils in thy name ; thou hast taught in our streets* (d) : we have entertained, or at least permitted the gospel to be preached. If such allegations should be made in that day,

(a) Heb. xiii. 17.

(b) 1 Tim. v. 21.

(c) Mat. xxv. 44.

(d) Mat. vii. 21.

it will appear reasonable that they should be answered, and witnesses of fact should be produced, for the sake of those present.—The last book mentioned by John, as opened in that day, is the book of *life*, which is distinguished from the other books. The book of life, I apprehend, is the book of God's election, containing the names of those written in heaven; not that God needs or uses a book properly speaking, but he knows them that are his, as exactly as if all their names were registered in a book. This book of life is also called *the Lamb's book of life* (a), as it was a list or register of those given him to bring to glory. It is necessary that this book should be opened, because as he who best knew, has told us, *it was the will of him that sent him, that of all that he had given him he should lose nothing* (b). The opening this book will make it evident, that Christ hath faithfully discharged his trust, and that *he gives eternal life to as many as the Father had given him* (c). This will make an exact discovery of God's elect, and will silence all the proud and envious cavils of men against it. They would not believe it, they could not endure it; they studied all the shifts and evasions possible to run it down, and to rob God of this jewel of his crown; but by opening this book he will vindicate his truth, and make it known to all the world, that *he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, and will shew them this grace at *the revelation of Jesus Christ* (d). How will the elect rejoice when it appears that their names were enrolled in the book of life, before the foundations of the world were laid! I come now,

5. To consider the *nature* and *form* of the judgment itself; and this will consist in Christ's public and final consigning over the quick and dead, to their everlasting happiness or misery, according to their state and works. It has

(a) Rev. xxi. 27.

(b) John vi. 39.

(c) John xvii. 2.

(d) 1 Pet. i. 13.

been a question whether the sentence shall be vocally and audibly pronounced : I see no reason to think otherwise, seeing the whole transaction shall be public, and managed by the Son of God, in human nature. Why should we suppose, that his voice shall not be heard, as well as his body shall be seen : his voice is said to be *as many waters (a)* ; he will make all that are in *their graves hear his voice* : and he that forms the thunder can speak loud enough to make the whole assembly hear, though the greatest that ever was. We are told, that he shall say to them on his right hand, *Come you blessed* ; and to them on his left hand, *depart you cursed (b)*. We may suppose, that it will be exceedingly delightful to the saints, to hear their gracious sentence from his blessed lips ; and no less terrible to the wicked, to receive their dreadful doom the same way : But as to the vocal pronouncing it, we need not be very positive or tenacious, remembering that good note of Austin (*c*), ‘ In what manner and order the future judgment will be, experience will teach us better than human knowledge can perfectly inform us.’ It is of more importance, to consider the *matter* of the sentence, and the *order* of passing it.

With respect to the saved, Christ hath given it in these words, *Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*. Every word carries instruction and comfort in it ; it is not *depart*, but *come* ; be in my presence, behold my glory ; I your Judge call you, and authorize you to it : Thus he will call his own sheep by name, and give to them eternal life ; and therefore they may well have boldness in the day of judgment. The next words in the sentence are *you blessed* ; the curse is taken away ; and all spiritual blessings are

(a) Rev. i. 15.—John v. 28.

(b) Mat. xxv. 31, 41.

(c) Quibus modis et quo ordine veniant, magis tunc docebit rerum experientia, quam nunc valet consequi ad perfectum, hominum intelligentia. Aug. de civitat. lib. xx. c. 30.

given in me, and that by my Father : He chose you, he loved you, and appointed you to inherit the blessing, though the world hated you, and cursed you ; *come inherit the kingdom*, possess the celestial felicity, reign in life for ever, as if you were kings of the heavenly Jerusalem ; the kingdom was *prepared from the foundation of the world*, from eternity in my Father's love, decree, and promise to me the head and surety of the new covenant *before the world began* (a) : inherit, says the Judge, the kingdom prepared *for you* ; not for others, not for such as you, but for your very persons, who were loved, chosen, and blessed of my Father, before the world was. Thus will Christ own and publish the doctrine of election in that day ; and those who could not bear it in this world, shall be forced to bear it in the great day : you, says Christ, were blessed of my Father, the kingdom was prepared by him for you, before the world was. Thus he refers their whole salvation to the electing grace and love of the Father, which indeed was the original and first moving cause of it. We may further observe, with respect to the order of time, that the sentence is first passed upon the *righteous* ; and herein many valuable ends are answered : Christ will begin with the work of mercy, which is most pleasing to him ; thus he honours the Father's choice in making such an early discovery of it, and shewing such a respect to the objects of it, preventing their being terrified with the sentence of the wicked, and preparing them to give their approbation and suffrage when he shall pronounce sentence, which I apprehend is their *judging the world, even angels* (b). This will be preparatory to the condemnation of the wicked ; and will, as it were, anticipate their judgment, and increase their horror, whilst they see those persons absolved, and honoured, whom they had condemned and despised ; whence they may infer what.

(a) Tit. i. 2.

(b) 2 Cor. vi. 2.

doom they themselves are to expect, which comes next to be considered.

This part of the sentence will be, *Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* (1). It is wonderful to think, that any that own the scripture, and read there of the everlasting fire, to which the wicked are adjudged, should yet deny the eternity of hell torments. We are to observe, that the sentence passed upon the wicked, is as contrary to that received by the righteous, as the state, temper, and actions of the former, are opposite to the latter. To the righteous, Christ will say, *Come* ; to the wicked, *Depart* : they never loved Christ, nor his people, and now they shall be banished from them for ever, and have no communion with them in glory. But their misery is not barely privative, for they depart *accursed* ; all the curses of the law lie in force against them, and they go into *everlasting fire* ; no words can express the misery therein comprehended : it will be an aggravation of it, that they must be *for ever with the devil and his angels* ; they would do the devil's lusts on earth, and therefore are justly condemned to suffer with him in hell. The sentence of the evil angels seems to be included in these words, *The everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels* ; as they are reserved to the judgment of the great day, doubtless they shall not escape being judged in that day, though we have no particular account of it, as we have of men's being judged ; the scripture being written for the use of men, not of devils, which may be a sufficient reason, why they give us no larger account of that matter. Thus I have hinted what, I hope, may be sufficient, to give some useful view, of the nature and form of that judgment, or sentence, which Christ shall pass upon the quick and the dead in the great day. I come now to the next general head ; therefore,

(1) Mat. xxv. 41.

V. I shall mention some of the *properties* of this judgment : This may farther illustrate the nature of it, and be a means to excite us to a more awful regard to it, and preparation for it. *Seeing we look for such things, how diligent should we be that we may be found of Christ in peace without spot and blameless (a) ?*

1. This judgment will be *universal* and *unavoidable*. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (b)*. No demurrer takes place in this court ; there is nothing to be done, in arrest of judgment ; it can be neither delayed, nor prevented ; no person will have subtilty or power enough to escape. The Judge is prepared, the day is appointed, the justice of God, as well as the souls under the altar, cry, How long, till vengeance be taken on the wicked ? ‘ It will be in vain, as one says, (c) to look about for help, all the world cannot rescue one soul ; there is no avoiding, by appeal, for it is the last judgment ; nor by rescue, for they shall be compelled ; nor by flight, for there is no escaping ; nor by intreaties, for the Judge is inexorable.’

2. It will be an *awfully terrible* judgment. This, in part, was cleared before, when I spoke of the *solemnities* of that day and work ; and yet there is room to add something here. Christ taught his disciples to fear him who is *able to destroy soul and body in hell (d)*. A sense of what they themselves have deserved, and of what the wicked must undergo, in that day, may excite awful thoughts in the righteous concerning it : To think of the sun’s failing, the stars falling, the Judge appearing in flaming fire, when the great day of his wrath shall come, is enough to fill our hearts with fear and amazement ; and may and ought to give a check to the sinful appetite . ‘ I had not,’ said Austin, (e)

(a) 2 Pet. iii. 14.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 10, 11.

(c) Manton on 2 Cor. v. 10. p. 107.

(d) Luke xii. 3, 4.

(e) Nec me revocabat a profundiore voluptatum carnalium gurgite, nisi metus mortis et futuri judicii tui, qui per varias quidem

‘ been delivered from the gulph of carnal pleasures, had
 ‘ it not been for the fear of death, and this future judge-
 ‘ ment, which, amidst various opinions, never went out of
 ‘ my thoughts.’ Some men have a certain fearful expecta-
 tion of this judgment, beforehand (*a*); and it will not be
 less terrible to them, when it comes: when in scripture it
 is said (*b*), that *the powers of heaven shall be shaken*,
 some think the angels are meant; for, ‘ great fear and
 ‘ trembling will lay hold on them, says one (*c*), on the
 ‘ account of that awful judgment, and the terrors of the
 ‘ Judge.’ ‘ If, says another (*d*), all the angels praised
 ‘ God, with a loud voice, when the stars were made, how
 ‘ shall they be affected with the universal change of that
 ‘ day, when they shall see all the world standing before the
 ‘ terrible tribunal, and their fellow-servants giving an ac-
 ‘ count?’ We also read (*e*), that *the devils believe and
 tremble*, at the thoughts of their future doom and misery;
 and the thing itself will not be less terrible, than the fore-
 thought of it: Such among men as neither believe. nor fear
 it, who daily make a sport with damnation, seem hardened
 to a greater degree than the devils themselves; they tremble,
 whilst others deride the judgment of the great day.

3. To the wicked it will be *pure unmixed* judgment; or
 judgment without mercy. God will not spare the guilty;

opiniones nunquam tamen recessit de pectore meo. Aug. lib. 7.
 Confess. cap. 16.

(*a*) Heb. x. 27, 30, 31.

(*b*) Mat. xxiv. 29.

(*c*) De Angelis dicit, tremor enim eos apprehendet, et timor
 magnus—propter judicis terrorum, et terribili apparatu de judicis
 intuentis horrenda formidine contremiscent. Aug. in Parasc. Serm.
 1. Tom. 10. p. 886.

(*d*) Εἰ γὰρ ὅτι ἰγίνετο τὰ ἄστρα ὕψος ἰφρίζαν, καὶ ἰθαύμασαν, πολλῶ
 μᾶλλον ὁρῶντες πάντα μεταρρυθμιζόμενα καὶ τὸς Συνδούλους αὐτῶν δίδοντας.
 θυθύνας ἰθυθύνας, καὶ τὴν ὀικυμένην ἅπασαν φοβιρῶ παρισταμένην δίκαστρίῳ.
 Chrysost. in Mat. xxiv. 29.

(*e*) James ii. 19.

sins of omission shall not be overlooked; he shall have judgment, without mercy, who has shewed no mercy. Unbelievers will be judged by a law, that admits of no mercy, but *curses every one, that continues not, in all things written therein, to do them (a)*; hence their cup of wrath is *without mixture (b)*; So much are the wicked mistaken in their expectations, that they shall find mercy in that day. The scripture says, that *without respect of persons, God judgeth according to every man's work (c)*. In this world the wicked neither shewed mercy, nor sought mercy aright; and at the great day, they shall have judgment without the least grain of mercy. 'A sea of wrath without one drop of mercy,' as one speaks (*d*).

4. It will be an *impartial* judgment; *for there is no respect of persons with God: As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law (e)*. No mild interpretation shall be put either upon the commanding, or condemning part of the law; nor shall one sinner find more favour than another: Jews and Gentiles, great and small, rich and poor, are all alike to the Judge; for he will have no respect of persons in judgment. Hence those who cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, are rejected, being found *workers of iniquity*.

5. It will be a *righteous* judgment (*f*). I shewed before, that the Judge is righteous: and what can be expected from him, but a righteous judgment? *He shall judge the world in righteousness*, say the scriptures: Justice will hold the balance, in an even hand.

It may be said, Where is the justice of judging men to eternal punishment, for temporary crimes, which were but of short duration? To this I answer,

(1.) Adam's sin, in eating the forbidden fruit, was soon committed, the act was but of a short duration; but yet

(a) Gal. iii. 10.

(b) Rev. xiv. 10.

(c) 1 Pet. i. 17.

(d) Case's Pisgah, p. 170.

(e) Rom. ii. 11, 12.

(f) Acts xvii. 31.

God has been punishing the world for it, more than five thousand years : and therefore a sin, soon committed, may demerit a long punishment ; for we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth.

(2.) Among men of the greatest justice and probity, there is no proportion of time observed between the commission of the fault, and the inflicting the punishment ; imprisonment for life, or even death itself, is thought to be a just punishment, for a fact done in a day, an hour, or in a few moments.

(3.) Sin has an infinite evil in it, objectively considered, as it is against that God, who is infinitely great and good. Now, an infinite evil deserves an infinite punishment ; and seeing that cannot be inflicted at once, upon a finite creature, reason dictates that it should be continued, till the whole debt is paid ; and because that can never be, by the sinner, therefore his punishment is eternal.

(4.) The judgment is justly measured by the will of the offender ; his will is bent to sin for ever ; and therefore it is equal, that he should suffer for ever : ‘ Because, says Austin (a), the sinner would have enjoyed his sin for ever, he meets with the severity of eternal punishment.’ It is not unjust, that he should be judged, as he himself judged, and that he suffers, in the punishment of his evil mind, as he would have acted.

(5.) If all these things are put together, it may appear, that Christ’s judgment will be righteous, though he allots men everlasting punishment, for sins committed in a short space of time. The distributions of providence seem to be unequal ; but the distribution of the great day will be very equal : men shall *receive according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad (b)*. The wicked shall be rewarded, according to their evil works, and the saints according to their

(a) Epist. 49.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 10.

good works. Christ shall judge the *people in equity* (a), not according to outward appearance : he will thoroughly purge his floor, and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire ; but the least grain of wheat shall not be lost.

6. It will be a *clear* and *open* judgment ; not only righteous in itself, but a *revelation of the righteous judgment of God* (b). Righteousness and judgment are always the habitation of God's throne, but yet in this world clouds and darkness are round about him (c) : hence the prophet says, *Let me talk with thee of thy judgments ; wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper* (d) ? but in the great day, all things will be set in a clear light ; it will be a day of discovery and revelation. ' The word *revelation* is properly used, says one (e) ; for then it shall be revealed, that every one receiveth according to his works.'

7. It will be *eternal* judgment, with respect to the execution, not with respect to the passing the sentence. How long the day of judgment may last, we do not know, God has not revealed it ; but this we know, that after the judgment, comes the everlasting punishment ; and with respect to that it is called *eternal judgment* : It is decisive and determining for an eternal state ; the sentence can never be reversed, for there is no higher court to appeal to, nor will the same court ever sit again, to alter the sentence ; therefore it can never be annulled, when once passed. ' It is ' absurd to imagine, as one has observed (f), that the judgment should be eternal, in its duration ; but it shall be so ' in its end and effects.' It may also be called eternal, in opposition to temporal judgments, such as that of Christ, that passed on the saints by the wicked, and that which profes-

(a) Isa. xi. 4.

(b) Rom. ii. 5.

(c) Psal. xcvi. 2.

(d) Jer. xii. 1, 2.

(e) Καὶ καλῶς ἤτιπον, ἀποκαλύψιως, τότε γὰρ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἕκαστος ἐπὶ τὸ κατ' ἀξίαν ἕκαστος ἀπολαμβάνει. Chrysost. in Rom. ii. 5.

(f) Dr. Owen's Exposit. on Heb. vi. 1, 2, p. 26.

sors now very unjustly pass upon one another : All these shall be called over, and rescinded, in the great day, which will unalterably fix every man's happiness or misery in the world to come. Upon Christ's passing judgment, *the wicked* are said to go away into everlasting punishment, and the *righteous into life eternal* (a). Thus I have finished the fifth general head, which was to mention some of the *properties* of the last judgment ; I shall now conclude this discourse with some

APPLICATION.

1. How firmly should we *believe*, and how often and seriously should we *think* of this judgment to come ? The evidence of it is clear and full, both from scripture, reason and conscience ; to disbelieve it, therefore, is to sin against the light of nature, as well as against revelation. A firm persuasion, and a serious consideration of this doctrine, would have a good effect. Tertullian, as it is said (b), observed, in his time, that none lived loosely, but either such as did not firmly believe a future judgment, or such as put the thoughts of it out of their minds. ' Let us, say one (c), ' fix our thoughts on Christ's dreadful tribunal, where all ' things will be opened to his eyes which in word, or deed, ' or thought, we have committed ; let us think on the fiery ' lake, the everlasting chains, the darkness void of light, the ' gnashing of teeth, the worm that dieth not, which will ' make it a dreadful day to the wicked.' Say not these are mere words, the merciful God will never so punish men ; is

(a) 1st. xxv. 46.

(b) Leigh's body of divinity, p. 863.

(c) Ἐπειτα ἀναλογιζόμεθα τὸ φοβερὸν ἔημα τῷ Χριστῷ, ἐν ᾧ πάντα γυμνὰ καὶ τετραχηλισμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ· τὰ ἐν λόγῳ, τὰ ἐν ἔργῳ, τὰ ἐν διανοίᾳ· ἵπταται τὸν ποταμὸν τοῦ πυρὸς, τοὺς δίσκους τοὺς ἀλύτους τοῦ σκότους τοῦ ἀφειγγοῦς, τοῦ βρυγμοῦ τῶν ὀδόντων, τοῦ σκλάπηκος τον ἰσθμοῦ, τῇ ἡμίρῳ ἐκείνῃ τὴν ὀδυνησάν μὲν τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς. Chrysost. in secundum Do-
mini adventum, p. 545. ubi et cætera videas.

God a liar ? How did he deal with Dives, with the foolish virgins, with the old world, with Sodom and Gomorrah, with Corah, Dathan, and Abiram ? How was Jerusalem destroyed for rejecting Christ ? How were Ananias and Sapphirah punished ? If God is too merciful to punish sinners, why were not these spared ? Why did Christ say, *Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish* ? Did the devils confess an appointed time for their torment ; and shall not men be ashamed and blush to deny what they could not but own ? Were a man to be tried for his life at the next assizes, how would his thoughts be taken up with it ? and shall we forget that tribunal where we must shortly be judged, justified, or condemned for eternity ?

2. If Christ will judge the quick and dead ; then hence we may learn, that he is truly and really God. *God is judge himself (a)*, according to the scriptures. No person below God can judge the world in righteousness. How can we once imagine, that a mere creature can raise the dead, bring the whole world before his tribunal, know the secrets of all hearts, pass and execute judgment upon every one, according to his works ? *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God (b)*. So then Christ is that God, before whose judgment-seat we shall all stand. It is indeed said *(c)*, that the world shall be judged by *the man Christ Jesus* ; which shews, that Christ's human nature shall be employed in the judgment, but by no means excludes him from being God, or acting as God in the judgment of the great day. It will be a manifestation of the glory of God, to judge the world ; this glory is peculiar to God, and he will not give it to another, to a mere creature. Seeing therefore he has given it to Christ, he is the great God ; so he is called, with respect to this day and work, for we must

(a) Psal. l. 5.

(b) Rom. iv. 10, 11.

(c) Acts xvii. 31.

be looking for the glorious appearing of our great God, and Saviour Jesus Christ (a). He shall come in the glory of his Father (b); but who could appear in that infinite glory, that did not enjoy that infinite divine nature to which it appertains? The Judge has, and must have infinite wisdom, power, knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and he that has these, is certainly true God: such therefore is Christ our Judge.

3. What reason have we to hold fast the faith, once delivered to the saints. This inference is well drawn from the future judgment, by the apostle Paul, where he has said, *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together to him, that you be not soon shaken in mind (c)*. If we must not part with an inferior truth, much less with those of an higher nature, and greater importance; for Christ will come again, and gather us together to him, and call us to an account whether we have kept the faith, that precious depositum, or whether we have made shipwreck of it, and of a good conscience. Christ laid the matter plainly before us, when he said, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven (d)*.—
 ‘ Every one that confesses that Christ is God, shall find
 ‘ Christ confessing him before his Father, that he is a faithful servant, says one (e);’ but on the other hand, Christ has said, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels (f)*. Christ, the Judge, will deal with us hereafter, as we deal with him, and his truth in this world: if we suffer with

(a) Tit. ii. 13. (b) Mat. xvi. 27. (c) 2 Thes. ii. 1, 2.

(d) Mat. x. 32.

(e) Πᾶς ὃν ὁ ὁμολογῶν ὅτι Θεὸς ἔστι ὁ Χριστός, ἐκρήσει τὸν Χριστὸν ὁ μολογῶντα περὶ αὐτοῦ πᾶν πᾶσι, ὅτι γνήσιος ἔστι δούλος. Theophylact. in loc.

(f) Mark viii. 38.

him we shall reign with him ; if we deny him, he will also deny us ; if we are ashamed of his truth, he will be ashamed of our persons in the great day ; if we do not own him, profess, and confess him, declare his truth, and stand up for it, but through cowardice or covetousness, conceal the truth, and designedly express it so doubtfully, that men lose our testimony, and cannot tell whether we are friends or enemies to Christ, and the great truths of the gospel, what must we then expect from the righteous Judge, but to be rejected and disowned by him, according to his own plain declaration, in the forecited scripture ? It is then no indifferent thing, how we conduct ourselves in this matter, whether we *handle the word of God deceitfully* (a), or by an ingenuous, free, open manifestation of the truth commend ourselves to every man's conscience. Let us then remember, that Christ observes our behaviour, and will reward or reject us in the day of judgment, according as we confess him, or are ashamed of him or his truth in this world : This should make us *hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints*.

4. How vain a thing is it to rest in a *form of godliness*, void of the *power of it* ? Christ's eyes are as a flaming fire, and his judgment will be according to truth ; there is no darkness, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves : sinners in Sion may then be afraid, and fearfulness may well surprise the hypocrite. Let not such be deceived, Christ is not mocked : The foolish virgins are *shut out of the kingdom* (b), when the Judge comes : That day will make an exact discrimination betwixt the sheep and the goats ; and the saints shall be able rightly to discern betwixt the righteous and the wicked, which perhaps was never done by them in this world. This should excite us to pray and strive, that we may be accepted of God, and be found sincere in the day of Christ, which will bring to *light the*

(a) 2 Cor. iv. 2.

(b) Mat. xxv. 10—12.

hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart (a) : every man's works shall be made manifest for the day shall declare it ; disguises will be of no use when we come before him, to whose eyes all things are manifest and open, even to him to whom we must give an account.

5. Shall Christ judge the quick and the dead ? then how diligent should we be, that we may be *found of him in peace, without spot and blame ?* This is our grand concern ; our eternal safety and happiness are wrapt up in it. If we abide in Christ by faith, and cleave to him in love, we shall not be *ashamed before him at his coming (b)*. Our love is made perfect, when by intimate communion with Christ in love we taste his love, and so are helped to exercise ours to him, in an higher degree ; and then we may have boldness in the day of judgment. We need not be ashamed to appear before him whom we have loved so much, and of whose love we have had such a sense and evidence, because as he is, so are we in this world ; seeing he hath changed us into his image, and admits us into his gracious presence, therefore we may depend upon it, that the Judge will not destroy us, and his own image in us. This gives us confidence in the fore-thoughts of the day of judgment ; this shews us the true way to safety and comfort, in the views and approaches of the judgment of the great day. May we then cleave to Christ, in faith and love ; and then that day, which to unbelievers will be of all the most terrible and miserable, will be to us the most joyful and happy. O then let us *kiss the Son, lest he be angry ;* blessed are they, and only they, who before the day of his wrath, put their trust in him ! Inexpressible is the encouragement and comfort, which those who receive Christ by faith, may receive from these words of Christ, *I am the resurrection and the life, he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall*

(a) 1 Cor. iv. 5.—iii. 12.—Heb. i. 5.

(b) 1 John ii, 28.—i. 4, 17.

he live ; and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die (a). Here is the Christian's safety, here is his triumph ; this may cause him not to fear, but to love and desire Christ's appearance, that he may receive that *crown of righteousness*, which the righteous Judge shall give to all such, in the great day, when *he shall come to be glorified in the saints, and admired in all those that believe (b).*

6. How different shall Christ's *second coming* be from his *first* ? It may be useful to compare them in our thoughts : When he first appeared, it was in the *form of a servant* ; when he comes again, it will be as *God over all, blessed for ever* : then he was laid in a *manger*, among beasts ; hereafter he shall sit upon a *throne of glory*, surrounded with myriads of angels : formerly his *visage was more marred than any man's* ; hereafter it shall *outshine the sun in his strength* : at first he came to be *judged and condemned* by men ; at his next appearance he shall *judge both quick and dead* : in the days of his humiliation, he came lowly, *riding upon the foal of an ass* ; when he comes to judgment he will come riding on the *clouds of heaven* : at his first coming he was the *derision* of his enemies ; when he appears the second time, he will be their *dread and terror* ; formerly he *endured the cross*, hereafter he shall wear the crown : heretofore he submitted to the *curse* ; in the great day, he shall not only inherit, but also dispense the *blessing*, even life for evermore : he who died under the hands of his *enemies*, at his first coming, shall inflict eternal death upon all who shall be found such in the day of judgment : Christ will, in the great day, appear to be quite another manner of person than men took him to be, whilst he dwelt among them. What an amazing difference will there be between Christ the sufferer, and Christ who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearance, and his kingdom ?

(a) John xi. 25, 26.

(b) 2 Tim. iv. 8.—2 Thes. ii. 10.

SERMON IV.

Preached JULY 30, 1728.

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom.—2 TIM. iv. 1.

IN discoursing upon these words, I have formerly considered the certainty and time of the future judgment, the person and character of the Judge, the objects of the judgment, the form of process and properties of it : I now proceed to the next head ; and therefore,

VI. I shall assign some *reasons* of the last judgment.

1. This appointment is a means to curb the *lusts*, and reform the *lives* of men ; not that this shall be done, after the resurrection, for then there is no room for repentance or amendment ; but the knowledge of this judgment beforehand is a means, in the hand of the holy Spirit, to restrain from sin, and to excite men to repentance : It is true, this means alone is not sufficient to produce this effect ; for we see notwithstanding all that men hear of this judgment, yet *because sentence is not speedily executed, the hearts of many are fully set in them to do evil (a) ;* yet the certainty of this judgment is made use of, by the Holy Ghost, in scripture, as a motive to repentance ; and when he sets it home upon the heart, it is also an effectual means of it. This the royal preacher had in view, in his ironical address to a libertine, *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment (b).* The consideration of the future judgment

(a) Eccles. viii. 11.

(b) Eccles. xi. 9

is here proposed as a means to check the lusts, and reform the lives of young persons, who are so prone to indulge their voluptuous appetite. Paul urges repentance upon the Athenians, by this very argument ; *God*, said he, *now commands all men to repent, because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness (a)* ; or, because he has now made it known, that there is an appointed day, in which he will judge the world, therefore he commands all men to repent : *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men (b)* ; we urge them to consider, the terrible day of judgment, that is coming, and intreat them to live, and act as those that must give an account. The apostle Peter's advice to those to whom he wrote was this, *Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear ; the Father, without respect of persons, judges every man according to his works (c)*. Thus we see how the Holy Ghost makes use of the future judgment, as a motive to check sin, and to engage men to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

2. Christ shall judge the quick and dead, as a public vindication of providence and the gospel. Wicked men, in this world, often quarrel at providence, and good men too often stumble at it ; the former think they suffer too much, the latter, that sinners suffer too little : The judgment of the great day will inform the one sort, and convince the other, that the wicked shall not go for ever unpunished, nor the saints always lie neglected. It will then appear, that all things were ordered for the best, and that the prosperity of sinners in this world, is no more worthy to be compared with the eternal weight of vengeance in hell, than the Christian's present afflictions, which are but for a moment, are to be compared with his eternal weight of glory, which shall be allotted him, in the great day. The gospel, and the ministers of it, had represented sin as the greatest folly and evil,

(a) Acts xvii. 30, 31.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 11.

(c) 1 Pet. i. 17.

exposing men to eternal perdition, and had taught men, that life and immortality are to be enjoyed through faith in Christ, that he is Lord and King over the whole world, and that those who will not have him to reign over them shall be destroyed. These things sinners would not believe; some treated them with rage, others with ridicule and contempt; and the publishers of these things endured many cruel mockings, for the sake of so unwelcome a message: Some have confidence enough to say the gospel is all a cheat, folly, and fancy, not worth the regarding, but the judgment day will set these things in a clear light, and will convince all *the ungodly of their hard speeches, and ungodly deeds (a)*.—Christ, in the great day, will reprove those who had, from the delay of judgment, inferred, that God was such an one as themselves, and then he will set their sins in order before them. It is but reasonable, that Christ, his gospel, and the ministers and embracers of it should be publicly vindicated, seeing they had been openly traduced and condemned: This will be the work of the great day, when Christ will appear to his people's joy, but their enemies shall be ashamed. The evil of sin, and the folly of sinners will then evidently appear; then men will find meekness turned into fury, mercy into severity, a Saviour become a destroyer: and seeing all this is owing to sin, surely it must be a dreadful evil, which provoked him who had love enough for men to die for them, now to come to take vengeance upon them. They who would not see the evil of sin, in the glass of Christ's sufferings, shall see it in the glass of their own sufferings, and of others their companions.

3. The full *retribution to Satan and sinners*, may be

(a) Ἰδὼ ἦλθι κύριος — ποιῆσαι κρίσιν κατὰ πάντων, καὶ ἐξελέγξαι, πάντας τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς αὐτῶν, περὶ πάντων τῶν ἔργων ἀσεβείας ὧν ᾔσκησαν, καὶ περὶ πάντων σκληρῶν ὧν ἐλάλησαν κατ' αὐτοῦ ἀμαρτωλοὶ ἀσεβεῖς. Jud. 14, 15.

The word ἐξελέγξαι, which is rendered *convince*, signifies to *reprove upon clear evidence*.

assigned as another reason of the future judgment ; none of them have their full recompence before that day. The devils are reserved to that judgment, and expect greater torment then. This is implied in those words of the evil spirits to Christ, *Art thou come to torment us before the time (a) ?* To have all their wickedness ripped up and laid open, to be dethroned by Christ, to be judged by him, and by the saints, as assenting to it, and rejoicing in it, and to be prevented doing any more mischief upon the earth ; these things will be a great torment to them, though the wrath of God, which they will endure, after the judgment, will be still more tormenting. As to signers of the human race, they are miserable but in part, before the last judgment, their bodies feel no pain in the grave ; but after the judgment of the great day, they shall have a full recompence in their entire persons. In this world it is hard, if not impossible, to punish some of them suitably to their crimes, but in the great day Christ will do it : Such punishment was not so proper in this world, because they had not finished their course, nor had the whole number of them filled up the measure of their iniquity, before the end of time, and then comes the judgment. Hence it appears, how reasonable and fit it is, that there should be such a judgment, in which devils and wicked men shall receive the full reward of their evil deeds.

4. Christ shall judge the quick and dead, for the sake of his *own people*. Justice and favour are what they have reason to expect, at that day : They had often forbore to avenge themselves, committing their cause to him that judgeth righteously ; they had been injured much in their good names and estates ; and many of them had lost their lives for Christ's sake, expecting that Christ would come again and judge the world in righteousness. Hence the souls of those under the altar, who were slain for the testimony of Jesus,

(a) Matt. viii. 29.

are represented saying, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood (a) ?* Seeing thou art so holy, as to hate sin perfectly, and so true in thy threatenings against blood-thirsty sinners, and in thy promises to thy suffering people, why dost thou not plead our cause, and do us justice upon them, who wrongfully took away our lives, for our love to the gospel and thy truth ? The answer to this loud cry we have in these words, *It was said to them, that they should rest yet for a little season, till their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.* Their blood is to be avenged, in the great day, when all the number of the martyrs will be completed. Justice and faithfulness to Christ's suffering servants, therefore, make this judgment necessary. The favour and honour which the saints are then to receive, is a farther reason for it ; an expectation is given them, that Christ will in that day not only acquit, but also publicly confess and own them ; and that they shall stand at his right hand, judge the world, and receive a crown of righteousness from the righteous Judge : now, if there should be no such judgment, how would the saints be deceived and disappointed ? they have been directed to *hope to the end (b)*, for the grace that should be brought them, at the revelation of Jesus Christ ; they hope then publicly to appear in that righteousness in which they had desired to be found, and to meet amicably with those at Christ's right hand, with whom they could not meet comfortably, in religious assemblies, in this world ; they hope to see the Judge in all his robes of glory, and this hope shall not make them ashamed ; if before the promise and declaration of these things, they could have no reason to expect it, yet after such expectations had been given them, by God himself, it is reasonable that he should answer them ; and therefore that Christ should judge the quick and dead. Christ teaches his people by his word,

(a) Rev. vi. 9—11,

(b) 1 Pet. i. 13.

and enables them by his Spirit, to love, and look, and long for his appearing, as *the great God and their Saviour (a)*; which will be the most joyful sight they ever beheld. Inexpressible comfort must it yield them, to see such a conjunction of majesty and mercy in the Judge; and shall he not come at all? Can we think, that he will deal so cruelly with his people as to disappoint them? That is the time, for the public reward of all the secret good deeds of the saints, which both reason and modesty taught them to conceal in this world: *Pray to your Father that is in secret*, (said Christ) *(b)*, and *he that seeth you in secret shall reward you openly*. He that has put down their private conferences, and their secret thoughts and meditations, in the book of his remembrance *(c)*, will not forget or conceal them in the great day. 'Not a prayer, (says one) *(d)* but 'it was filled up; not a sigh, not a groan, but is booked; 'not a tear but it is bottled; not a holy ejaculation, but 'it is upon record, and shall be publicly produced and acknowledged.' Those very acts of charity that were done so secretly, that the left hand knew not what the right hand did, shall be published upon the house top, the great house of heaven and earth; they were not done so closely but they shall be as openly rewarded: *God is not unrighteous, to forget their work and labour of love*; therefore it is reasonable, on the saints' account, that there should be such a day of judgment, when a *reward is to be given to them that fear God, both small and great (e)*.

5. Christ shall judge the quick and dead, that his *work* may be finished, and his *glory* made manifest. All men are to *honour the Son even as the Father (f)*; that is, says one *(g)*, with *equal* honour. For this end it is requisite he

(a) Tit. ii. 13 — 2 Tim. iv. 8.

(b) Mat. vi. 4.

(c) Mal. iii. 16.

(d) Case's Mount Pisgah, part ii. p. 128.

(e) Rev. ix. 18.

(f) John v. 22.

(g) "ὅτι καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁμοτιμᾶται τῷ Πατρί, ὡς ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοτιμᾶται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ."

should appear, as the great God and Saviour. The world created him as an impostor; the far greater number of men in the world, at this day, do not own him: his enemies formerly condemned and crucified him; but Christ, when he was judged by them, put them in mind that judgment would come to his turn hereafter (*a*); that they should see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds, that is, to judge the world, as Chrysostom (*b*), and others understand it: Then he will wipe off his reproach, and will vindicate his character and office. What was prophesied of the church shall be fulfilled in her head; *His enemies shall bow before him, and lick the dust* (*c*); all that had despised him shall bow themselves down at the soles of his feet: this shall be but a just recompence of his former humiliation and sufferings. They who had despised him as man, shall be forced to acknowledge him as God and Judge of all. In that day his honour shall be more public than ever his ignominy and shame had been; for it shall be manifested to the whole world, angels, and men, at once: He shall come in *his Father's glory* (*d*), and with the most public marks of his approbation and esteem. In the great day, the glory of Christ's perfections will appear, of his faithfulness in the performance of his promises and threatenings, and of his holiness in the condemnation of sinners, and approbation of the saints: he had promised his servants to come again (*e*), and receive them to himself: and concerning the wicked he said, *Vengeance is mine, and I will recompense* (*f*). And after all, should he not judge the world, how would the glory of his holiness and truth be obscured and lost? The glory of his love and merits would

τιμῶν τὸν υἱὸν, εὐ τιμᾷ τὸν Πατέρα, τῇ ναυτῇ ἐννοήσας τιμὴν, οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς ὁ μὴ τιμῶν, ἀλλὰ ὁ μὴ τιμῶν οὕτως, ὡς εἰπὼν, φησιν, οὐ τιμᾷ τὸν πατέρα. Chrysost. in loc.

(*a*) Mat. xxvi. 64. (*b*) Vid. Chrysot, in loc. (*c*) Psal. lxxii. 9.

(*d*) Mat. xvi. 27. (*e*) John xiv. 3. (*f*) Heb. x. 30.

be quite eclipsed ; nay, the honour of his whole mediation would be destroyed at once : but *he shall come to be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe (a) ;* or, by that glorious church which will be the glory of Christ in that day, and the occasion of eternal adorations and praises ; for which reason Christ will appear and judge the quick and dead.

I might add here, that Christ's complete victory over sin and Satan, death and the grave, will be celebrated in that day with public joy and triumph : when the saints appear without spot, it will be evident that sin is made an end of ; when Satan is judged at Christ's bar, it will be very plain that he is conquered ; and the universal resurrection will be a full proof of Christ's victory over death and the grave, and that the last enemy is then destroyed, and that all things are put under his feet. Thus we see that the glory of Christ requires, on many accounts, that he should come again and judge the quick and dead.

6. The *glory of God the Father*, and the *harmony of the divine perfections*, require this day of judgment ; then the glory, and the glorious fruits of electing love will appear in the clearest and most convincing light, whilst the Judge shall say, in the most public manner, to that innumerable company at his right hand, *Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world.* How large and how valuable will that electing grace then appear to be, which is now disbelieved by some, and despised by others ? The Father's wisdom in the choice of such a Saviour and Judge will be seen, when he comes, who is the brightness of his glory, and bears the express image of all his perfections. The universal subjection to Christ, in the great day, will be to the glory of God the Father ; the condition in which the redeemed will appear,

(a) 2 Thess. i. 10.

and the glory to which they are appointed, will magnify the love of the Father, in choosing them to such an happiness, and in securing it to them, by such a Saviour, who is also their Judge.—The harmony of justice and mercy that had often been heard of with pleasure, will be then seen with the greatest delight, in the person of the Judge, who is the just God and the Saviour, and in the actual and full happiness of the redeemed. Thus glory in the highest will accrue to God, in the work of the great day. This reason of the future judgment might be amplified, and others added, but I hasten :

VII. I shall mention some of the *consequences* of this judgment, and answer some *questions*. What consequences follow the judgment, Christ has represented in these words, *These, or the wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (a)*. The sentences are short, but the happiness and misery contained in them are as broad and as long as eternity, and include more than our thoughts can reach ; for, none knows *the power of God's anger* : nor has it *entered into the heart, what God has prepared for them that love him (b)*. The consequences of the judgment, with respect to the wicked, are their going away from God and Christ, and all that is good and comfortable, or that might make them happy ; and being plunged into that misery which is expressed by *fire*, to signify the greatness and the severity of the torment ; and to give us the fuller idea of it, it is said to be *prepared for the devil and his angels*, which may denote the aggravation of the punishment, not only in being put among such a dreadful company, but in sharing with them in the greatest torments, such as are due to those ancient and wicked spirits ; the fire of men's own guilt, the devil's rage, and the universal despair that fills the place, and, which is above all,

(a) Matt. xxv. 46.

(b) Psalm. xc. 11.—1 Cor. ii. 9.

the dreadful wrath of almighty God, will render the misery greater than words can express, or thoughts conceive.—The consequences of the judgment, with respect to the righteous, will be their going into life eternal; they shall by the Judge, who is also their Redeemer, be *presented to the Father unblameable and unreprouceable in his sight (a)*: They shall be presented by Christ, and exceeding joy will fill him and them, when he delivers up his charge to God, saying, *Behold here am I, and the children thou hast given me*; here are all thy chosen, not one is lost: *behold I give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me (b)*; they are then placed in the presence of Christ in the open view of Christ's glory, and are *for ever with the Lord (c)*. But what that life will be, into which the saints shall go, after the judgment of the great day, no mortal tongue can fully tell: *It does not yet appear what we shall be: but this we know, that when Christ appears, his saints shall appear with him in glory; and they shall be like him, and see him as he is (d)*. But, as this has been hinted at before, and doth not so immediately belong to the judgment itself, I shall here dismiss it; and shall proceed to answer three or four questions, relating to this judgment, and so conclude the doctrinal part.

1. It may be questioned, If Christ shall judge the quick and the dead, *why is this work so long delayed?* I answer, The day is appointed, and Christ will not stay a moment beyond it; *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry (e)*. There may be many reasons why Christ comes not so soon as some expect; God will give the wicked sufficient *space for repentance*: and *endure with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath, till they are fitted for destruction (f)*. There are in all ages elect to be born, con-

(a) Col'os. i. 22.

(b) Heb. ii. 13.—John vi. 39.—xvi. 2.

(c) Jude 24.—2 Thess. iv. 17.

(d) 1 John iii. 2.—Col. iii. 1

(e) Heb. x. 37.

(f) Rom. ix. 22.—2 Pet. iii. 9.

verted, tried, and ripened for glory ; and the judgment must not come till all things are ready for it. The delay exerciseth the faith, patience, and prayers of the saints. There are many great works of providence to be done before that day, and these have their proper seasons, connections, and progress ; but when all things are done, which God sees fit to do before-hand, then the Judge comes. When he came in the flesh it was in the fulness of time, that is, in the fit and appointed time ; and so it shall be when he comes to judgment. They are only scoffers that say, *Where is the promise of his coming (a) ?* and he is called an *evil servant* who says that his Lord delays it, or exceeds the appointed time.

2. It may be asked, If Christ shall come to judgment, *why is the time of it concealed ?* To this it may be replied, That if we could give no reason for it, yet God may have many ; and it ought to be a sufficient reason to us, that he has thought fit to conceal it : but we may suppose, that he thereby intended to check men's curiosity. The itch of knowing good and evil very early infected our nature ; and God might see it fit this way to shew his dislike of it : hereby also God maintains his sovereignty, by keeping secret the times which he hath put in his own power. With this answer Christ checked the disciples when they were for prying into this secret (*b*) : If the precise time of Christ's coming were known, some Christians might be more indolent and careless, and some sinners more furious and resolute in their wickedness. The apprehension of the evil servant, that his Lord delayed his coming, led him to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken (*c*). The wise king Solomon observed, that *because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the*

(a) 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.—Mat. xxiv. 48.

(b) Acts i. 7.

(c) Mat. xxiv. 49, 50.

hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil (a). If the delay of execution for a little time, hardens men in their sins, what would the certain knowledge that the judgment is a great way off do? God has concealed the day, that we may daily prepare and wait for it: *Watch you therefore, said Christ, for you know not what hour your Lord comes; therefore be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not of, the Son of man will come (b).* There is a better use to be made of our ignorance of the time, than, I fear, many would make of the knowledge of it, if God had pleased to reveal it.

3. Some may say, Are we not to consider the *signs* of Christ's coming which he himself hath left us? I answer, Doubtless we may; *whatever is written, is for our learning (c)*: but there are some things which it may be we shall be ever learning, and yet shall never come to the knowledge of, till we come into another world. As to the *signs* of Christ's coming in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's gospel, they are so intermixed with the signs of Jerusalem's destruction, that it is very hard, if possible, for us to distinguish them; especially, seeing the same thing is supposed to be used as a sign of Christ's coming to judgment, and of Jerusalem's destruction: and supposing we could distinguish the one from the other, how should we ever the more know the time, till we see the sign; or indeed, how near the sign and Christ's coming will be the one to the other, and consequently how near, or how far off the day of judgment might be? God has cast shame upon those who have had the vanity and folly to set the time of Christ's second coming, which to do cannot but be great presumption, seeing God has declared that no man knows it, and that he will keep it secret. It is better therefore to be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot and blame.

(a) Eccles. xi. 9.

(b) Mat. xxiv. 42, 44.

(c) Rom. xv. 4.

less, than to gratify a fleshly mind (*a*), by intruding into things which we have not seen, or which are not revealed in scripture. I shall, therefore, have no regard to those vain and curious questions, which some are for searching into, as what shall be the place of the judgment? how long it shall last? what time of the year it shall be? why Christ will come in a cloud? Concluding that there is no need for us to know, or warrant for us to determine, what the scripture doth not reveal, I shall therefore only speak to one question more, and that is,

4. Seeing Christ does not know the day of judgment, how is he fit to be the Judge if he doth not know the time of the judgment? How doth he know the hearts of men? and if he doth not know their hearts, how will he be able to bring to light all the hidden things of darkness, and to give to every one according to his works? I answer, That it is true, that Christ said, that *of that day knows no man, no not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father* (*b*); but then the word *Son* may be understood of the humanity, and not of Christ's divinity; and it is most agreeable to the context, so to undersand it, for he had a little before been speaking of himself as man, *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds* (*c*): and of this *Son*, that is, the *Son of man*, it is said, that he knows not the day of judgment.

It may be urged, that the *Son* there spoke of, is, in a sort of a climax, set above the angels; and therefore it is meant of the Son, in his highest nature, and as he is next to the Father: to which I reply, that by virtue of the union between Christ's humanity and his divine person (*d*), he as man is exalted above the angels; and therefore in that gradation, *of that day and hour knows no man, neither the angels, nor the Son, but the Father*; it is not improper to

(*a*) Colos. ii. 18.

(*b*) Mark xiii. 32.

(*c*) Mark xiii. 25.

(*d*) Heb. iv. 12.

set the Son, even as man, above the angels ; and if that soul, which is united to God, in the person of the Logos, did know the last day, inferior men cannot expect to know it before-hand, which was a good argument against the sinful curiosity of searching into things, upon which God has been pleased to cast a veil ; but it doth not follow from Christ's not knowing the day of judgment, as man, that he does not know it at all, or that it is not to be affirmed of him, in any respect, because he denies it in some respects, without mentioning any restriction or limitation ; for, this way of speaking he has used elsewhere, and often, where yet a restriction is implied, and must be understood ; for instance, in one place he said, *The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always (a)* : but a little after he said, *Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world (b)*. Now, he is always with them, and yet not always with them : Does he not contradict himself ? If his not being always with them, is understood of his bodily presence, it was not only true, but also very consistent with his being always spiritually present with them as God ; and so both assertions are true, and void of any contradiction, being properly applied to the two different natures which are in Christ, as he is both God and man. Thus Christ might say, that as Son of man, he knew not the day of judgment, without denying his knowledge of it as God ; for so considered, he must, and he did know it, it being essential to God to know all things : But it is affirmed of Christ, that he knew all things ; for thus the disciples said to him, *We are sure that thou knowest all things ; by this we believe that thou camest from God (c)* : That is, seeing it belongs only to God to know all things, and thou knowest all things, we therefore conclude, that thou art God, of the same nature with him : now, seeing Christ gave no check to the affirmation, that

(a) Mat. xxvi. 11.

(b) Mat. xxviii. 20.

(c) John xvi. 30.

he knew all things ; but has elsewhere said, that, he *searches the reins and the heart (a)*, which belongs to God only ; for he (b), even he only, knows the hearts of all the children of men : hence it follows, that Christ is God, and as God knew the day of judgment, which is included in all things which he knows ; and therefore he is capable of *judging the world in righteousness, seeing all things are naked and open to him as God (c)*, to whom we must give an account.

It would be very hard to suppose, that he who dwells in the bosom of the Father, and knows the Father as intimately as the Father knows him, should absolutely, and in all respects be ignorant of the day of judgment : He himself said, *As the Father knows me, so know I the Father ; all things that the Father hath are mine (d)* ; or, his perfections are my perfections. Is the Father ignorant of any thing ? If not, how can the Son, as God, be ignorant of any thing ? An ignorant God is no God ; and if Christ is not God, he is not fit to be the Judge of all the earth. As man he might be, and was ignorant of many things ; but being also God, he knew all things ; and therefore is qualified to be a righteous Judge, and to give to every man according to his works. This may suffice in answer to this question ; and thus I conclude the doctrinal part. All that remains, is the use and improvement we are to make of these things.

APPLICATION.

1. How seriously should we *think* of, and *prepare* for this awful day ? It is Christ's own advice. *Be you also ready ; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man will come (e)*. The certainty of the judgment, and the uncertainty of the time of it, should engage us, to give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure, and to

(a) Rev. ii. 25.

(b) 1 Kings viii. 39.

(c) Heb. iv. 13.

(d) John x. 15.

(e) Matt. xxiv. 44.

be found of Christ without spot and blameless. We may set about our work too late, as the foolish virgins did (a), who were shut out. If that day, which comes as a thief in the night, should come in our day, are we ready for it? If we are not fit to die, how are we fit to appear before the awful bar of Christ? and seeing we must all appear there, should we not labour to be in a state of acceptance with him, in good terms with our Judge? Is there any work in the grave, whither we are going? If our sins lie down with us in the dust, will they not rise up with us and appear against us, at the judgment-seat? If we remain impenitent and unbelievers, how can we expect, that our sins should be blotted out, when the times of refreshing to the saints shall come, from Christ's presence or second coming (b)? If the Judge should suddenly appear, and find us not ready, what shall we do, what will become of us, how shall we bear the dreadful sentence, *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?* Nay, how shall we bear the execution of it? Will there be any flying from the Judge, who is every where present? can we resist him who raises the dead, and compels the devils to appear before him, and submit to their condemning sentence? will there be any way to avoid appearing at that bar, before which all must stand? and who shall entreat for us, when the only Advocate appears as an angry Judge against all the unbelievers? How much then is it our interest to lay up a good foundation, against the time to come, and to lay hold on eternal life? The two main parts of preparation for that hour, are faith and holiness; the former is our fundamental, the latter our actual readiness for it. Such as abide in Christ shall not be ashamed before him at his coming (c); *There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus*; and, *blessed are the dead that die in the*

(a) Mat. xxv. 10, 11, 12.

(b) Acts iii. 19.

(c) 1 John ii. 28.—Rom. viii. 1.—Rev. xiv. 13.

Lord. The Judge will not condemn his own members to the everlasting fire; it would be as contrary to his commission, as to his inclination, to condemn any true believer in the great day. *This is the will of him that sent him, that every one that sees the Son, and believes on him, should have everlasting life (a)*: and where there is faith, it will work by love, and grow up into holiness; it will purify the heart and life, wherein consists our actual readiness for the Lord's coming. Christ has directed us (*b*), not only to avoid surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, but also to watch and pray always, that we may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man: The wicked shall not *stand in judgment (c)*, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Peter's advice therefore is very good and proper, *Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless (d)*. We should see that we are found in peace with God and conscience, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is upon every believer; and without spot and blameless, or advanced in purity and holiness, for without that no man shall see the Lord (*e*), look the Judge in the face with comfort, or be with him to behold his glory. It becomes such as hope to be with him, to purify themselves, as he is pure (*f*); and to fear God (*g*), and keep his commandments, for God will bring every work into judgment. A sense of forgiveness, and of a clear title to heaven, a heart weaned from sin, the world, and the inordinate love of life, and armed against the slavish fears of death; faith, love, and hope, improved and raised to a high pitch, are no small parts of our actual readiness for that awful day and trial. When faith is strong,

(a) John vi. 40.

(e) Psal. i. 6.

(c) Heb. xii. 14.

(g) Eccles. xii. 13.

(b) Luke xxi. 34.

(d) 2 Pet. iii. 14.

(f) 1 John iii. 2.

hope lively, experience rich, and joy unspeakable, such with whom it is thus, carry heaven about with them, and when they die do but go out of one heaven into another ; or, if Christ comes, and finds them alive, they do but pass from a life of grace, to a life of glory, from loving Christ's appearing to the beholding it with joy and admiration, from the waiting for the crown, to the putting it on, and appearing with Christ in glory (a). Happy will they be that are found in such a case ; such may have boldness in the day of judgment. Many take this to be all folly and fancy, but Christ would never have troubled us with such counsel, had not such preparation been highly necessary : We are not then to value the world's censures, it is better to be condemned by them now, than to be condemned with them hereafter : we are exhorted, as obedient children (b), not fashioning ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, to be holy in all manner of conversation, and to call on the Father who judges every man, according to his works, without respect of persons.

2. Will Christ judge the world in righteousness ? then it is the duty of all men to *repent*. If it was formerly with good reason said, when Christ came in the flesh, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (c) ; surely we may, with as great reason, now say, *Repent, for Christ will appear, to judge the quick and dead* (d), seeing God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness. *Repent*, said Peter, *and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ; for God shall send Jesus Christ* (e). If we would hereafter see the Judge with comfort, we must, in this life, see our sins with sorrow, and look upon him whom we have pierced, and mourn (f). The impenitent are treasuring up to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of God's righteous

(a) 1 John iv. 17.

(b) 1 Pet. i. 13.

(c) Matt. iv. 17.

(d) Acts xii. 31.

(e) Acts iii. 19, 20.

(f) Zech. xii. 10.

judgments (*a*). The scripture says, that if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; that is, be condemned with the wicked: this caused one of the ancients to say (*b*), 'Really I am dreadfully afraid to fall into the hands of the living God; I would appear before the face of his anger judged, and not to be judged: I will therefore judge my good and evil deeds.' Here we are to consider, that the grace of repentance is not the product of nature; Christ is exalted to give it (*c*), and the Spirit must be poured out, in order to our looking on him whom we have pierced, and our mourning after a godly sort. Where Christ gives repentance, there will he also give remission of sins; he will never condemn that person to death in the great day, to whom he gives repentance to life, in this world.

3. How *instructive* may this doctrine be, through God's blessing, to *unbelievers*; and that in many things? some of which I will mention. From this future judgment they may learn their dreadful stupidity and infidelity; what else can keep them quiet and merry in their sins, void of pardon and purity, and therefore exposed to such dreadful wrath and misery, in the day of God's righteous judgment? what folly and madness is it in them, to slight and provoke him who is to be their Judge; how can they expect he should own and receive them to himself, in the great day, who refused and rejected him obstinately, against the softest intreaties of mercy, even to their last moments, in this world? Have they any reason to expect to find mercy in the great day, who despised his mercy, in the gospel day? will not their folly be made manifest to all men, in the great day, who neglected eternal happiness, for the sake of a short-liv-

(*a*) Rom. ii. 4.

(*b*) Prorsus horreo incidere in manus Dei viventis; volo vultui iræ judicatus præsentari, non judicandus: judicabo proinde mala mea, judicabo et bona. Bernard. in Con. Serm. 55. fol. 178.

(*c*) Acts v. 31.—Zech. xiii. 10.

ed sensual gratification? Sinners may be for a short life and a merry one; but they forget the long eternity, and the misery they must endure in it: they say, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we must die*; but will they say, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we may be judged, and must be damned, being then in the same state which now we are in*? With what patience can they bear the thoughts of the everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and how will they endure the thing itself? How is it then that they will take no warning to fly from the wrath to come? How hard is it for them to kick against the pricks, and to contend with him who has a power sufficient to subdue all things to himself? How will they grapple with his wrath, before whom the great and the mighty shall not be able to stand; but when he comes to judgment (*a*), shall call to the rocks and to the mountains, to fall upon them, and to hide them from his indignation?—How dangerous is it for the ungodly to insult and injure the righteous? Do they not know, that it is a righteous thing with God (*b*), to recompense tribulation on them that trouble his people, and to the afflicted saints everlasting rest, when Christ shall be revealed from heaven to judge the world? If the withholding kindnesses from the saints will expose sinners to the curse (*c*), in the great day, what then will all their rage and malice, violence and cruelty against them do?—Must sinners appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? Surely they might hence learn, how necessary a change of heart and life is to their safety and comfort, in that day: How shall an impure and sinful creature stand before the holy Judge, or an unrighteous person bear his righteous sentence? Can his enemies expect to be received into his glory, or that he who died to destroy sin, will admit sinners, who love and obey it, to be with him for ever? How is it possible for

(*a*) Rev. vi. 15—17. (*b*) 2 Thes. i. 6. (*c*) Mat. xxv. 45. 46.

them to expect he should say to them, *Come you blessed*, when they know, that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (a)*, nor any thing that defiles enter into it? They should think how little all their subtilty and craft, pride and violence, will avail them, in the great day, when Christ will lay them open to all the world, and make the stoutest of them tremble at his presence? Might they not infer from the doctrine of the future judgment, how ruining a sin unbelief is, which binds all a man's sins upon him, and certainly exposes him to be doomed to that lake of fire, in which all unbelievers shall have their part *(b)*? for if he that believes not is condemned already *(c)*, there is no reason to think that such shall be absolved hereafter, for Christ's sentence now, and then, are not contradictory the one to the other. Surely they are their own enemies who slight the gospel, and hate that light, which shews them the way to escape the wrath to come.—These inferences may well be drawn from the doctrine of the future judgment, and how much would it be to sinners' advantage, if the holy Spirit would enable them, rightly to make them, and improve them, otherwise their rational knowledge will be of no service to them; *for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all those who hold the truth in unrighteousness (d)*.

4. How *useful* may the doctrine of the general judgment be to the *saints*? It should teach them not to repine, under the hardest usage in this world. *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment (e)*. Let not any of us say then, *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, for all the day long have I been plagued (f)*, whilst the ungodly prosper: let us look to their end; their feet stand in slippery places, they are reserved to judgment and punishment, in

(a) 1 Cor. vi. 9.—Rev. xxi. 27.

(b) Rev. xxi. 8.

(c) John iii. 18, 19. (d) Rom. i. 19.

(e) 2 Pet. ii. 9.

(f) Psal. lxxiii. 12, 13.

the great day : but there is deliverance and eternal life for the saints ; let none of them then think the ways of God unequal. They should learn patiently to bear unjust censures and ill usage : Christ will judge righteously ; therefore let not the Christian avenge himself (*a*), much less should he judge his brother, and set him at nought. Christ will judge righteously, and will vindicate the oppressed : It is, or at least it should be, a small thing to be judged of men, seeing he that judges us is the Lord (*b*). What encouragement have Christians to abound in love and beneficence to Christ and his interest ? The day of recompence is coming ; and God is not unrighteous (*c*), to forget our work and labour of love towards his name, if we minister to the saints. Christ is represented saying in the great day, *In as much as you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me* (*d*). How secure is the true believer's happiness ? Surely the Judge will not condemn those for whom he died, for so he would punish himself in punishing them ; will he lose the travail of his own soul, by condemning his people ? This can never be ; for, *he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied*. How good is it to get more knowledge of Christ ? They are most likely to have boldness and comfort, in the day of judgment, who shall see him upon a throne, with whom they have often had sweet communion, in the closet, in the family, and in the sanctuary. The terror of the future judgment should engage Christians, to do all they can to convince and persuade sinners, not to neglect the great salvation, but to seek to God, to enable them to fly to Christ for refuge ; what objects of compassion are ignorant unbelieving men ? Should not Christians do their utmost to pluck them as brands out of the burning ?

Christ will come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on such as know not God, and have not obeyed the gospel ; but he

(*a*) Rom. x. 14.

(*b*) 1 Cor. iv. 5.

(*c*) Heb. vi. 10.

(*d*) Mat. xxv. 40.

will, at the same time, come to be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe: How then may such love and look, and long, for his appearing? Then it is that they are to receive a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory that fades not away; from that time all anxious thoughts, guilty fears, fiery trials, dangers from sin within, or other enemies without, shall cease, and be done with for ever: The comfort of standing unblemished and complete at the bar, in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and of appearing with him in glory, may cause Christians to look for the day of Christ, as a blessed hope, a day of grace to them, a day of glory, wherein their bodies, their souls, and their company shall be all glorious. How desirable will it be to such to hear him, who had long been their advocate, and at that very time will be their Head, pronounce their joyful and gracious sentence, as their Judge, and say, *Come you blessed of my Father!* Surely there is reason to long for that state of the church, when every thing that offends shall be gathered out of it; *then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.* He that hath ears to hear let him hear this good news; it is really worth regarding; this day deserves to be desired by all the faithful. Let all Christians then keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. He is able to keep them from falling, and to present them before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: This will be the result of that judgment which Christ shall pass, as the finishing part of that glorious economy, wherein the Son of God became man, lived and died for his people on earth; rose from the dead, ascended, sat down at God's right hand, where he will intercede for all who come to God by him, till he shall come again to judge the quick and the dead, to divide the sheep from the goats, and to perfect that glorious work of redemption, which will fill all the inhabitants of heaven with the most delightful and endless praises.

These things I have endeavoured to place in the strongest light and best connexion I could : If what has been said shall be a means to save any soul from death, or to promote the meetness of any Christians for the inheritance of the saints in light, my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord ; and I shall have abundant reason to rejoice and give God the glory. By way of conclusion, I shall add my warmest wishes that the Lord the Spirit, may help all true Christians to abide in Christ, that they may not be ashamed before him at his coming to judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom.

THE END.





