

SUNDAY READING.

THE
GENERAL RESURRECTION,
PART I.

Being a Description, taken from Scripture,
of some of the Events which will come to
pass at the End of the World.



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General Resurrection, &c.

P A R T I.

EVER since sin entered into the world and death by sin, this earth has been a vast grave-yard, or burying-place for her children. In every age, and in every country, that sentence has been executing, "*Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*" Mankind at first consisted only of one pair, but how inconceivably numerous are now the sons of Adam! One single nation commonly contains many millions of men, and these millions form only one generation. How many, then, must be the millions that have appeared on the earth in the long run of near six thousand years! Let imagination call up this vast army;—infants that have just lived to see the light, multitudes of the young and middle aged, and all the old and grey-headed also—persons of all countries and of successive generations—let them all pass in review before us, and how vast and astonishing is the multitude! If the posterity of one man, Abraham, by one of his sons, was according to the language of Divine Promise, "*as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea shore, innumerable,*" who can compute the multitudes that have sprung from all the different Patriarchs? Who can

number the long line of children that have proceeded from Adam, and all the families of the earth that have sprung from the loins of Noah! But what is now become of this vast and inconceivable host? Alas! they are again turned into earth, their original element; they are all sunk into the grave, excepting only the present generation; and we also are going down, one after another, into that place appointed for all living. There has hardly, perhaps, been one moment of time, during the space of many thousand years, in which one person or other has not been dropping into the grave; and in some seasons, through the sword of war, the devouring pestilence, or other visitations of God, thousands have been mowed down at once, and have formed one undistinguished heap of dead. The greater part of mankind, beyond comparison, are now sleeping under ground. There lies beauty, mouldering into dust, a prey to the vilest worms; there lies the mean and humble beggar; and there lies the head that once wore a crown. There lie the mighty giants, the Samsons, and the Cæsars of the world. There lie the wise and the learned, as weak and helpless as the fool. There lie some with whom we ourselves have conversed, and who were once our dear friends and our companions; and there lie our fathers and mothers; and there perhaps also lies

a tender wife or husband, a child, a sister or a brother.

And shall they lie there always? Shall this body, the curious workmanship of God, "*fearfully and wonderfully made,*" continue always in these ruins, and shall it never be restored? This we know, that "*It is not a thing impossible with God to raise the dead.*" He that could first form our bodies out of nothing is just as able to form them anew, and to repair the wales of time and death. But what has he declared to be his intention in this case? for on this the matter turns; and it is a point which is fully revealed in the Scriptures. "*The hour is coming,*" says that Sacred Book, "*When all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they shall come forth; they that have done well, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.*" "*Behold,*" says St. Paul, "*I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep,*" (that is, mankind will not all be sleeping in death when the day of the Resurrection comes, for there will be one generation remaining then alive upon earth; "*but we shall all be changed; in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*" "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with*

the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air."

Let us now realise the majesty and terror of this tremendous day. When the multitudes of the dead are sleeping in the silent grave; when many perhaps of the living are thoughtless of the great event; when some men are running eagerly, as they are now, after riches and honours, and some after sensual pleasures; while they are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; while some are asleep in the dead of night; while some are planning future mischief; and some are in the very act of sin; while the course of nature seems to go on as usual, so that unbelieving scoffers take occasion from thence to ask, "*Where is the promise of his Coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*"—When, perhaps, a few only are serving God, and are looking for their Saviour's appearance—while the multitude in short no more expect the approaching judgment, than the people of Sodom did the destruction that befel them on that fine clear morning when Lot fled away; or than the people of the old world expected the Deluge on the day when Noah entered the ark—then suddenly shall

the Heavens open over the astonished world, and “*the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible;*” for in an instant the sound shall reach all the mansions of the dead, and “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,*” the dead shall be raised, and the living shall be changed. This call will be as effectual in raising each of the sons of men as ever that call of Christ was, “*Lazarus, come forth.*” O, what a surprize will it be to the thoughtless world! Should this alarm burst over our heads this moment, with what terror would it strike many a one who reads this description of it? How dreadful, then, will be the surprize and consternation when this event shall actually come to pass! Now, indeed, there are many who stop their ears: Now, though the voice of Mercy calls, though Reason pleads, and Conscience warns, yet multitudes will not hear; but then there shall be no one among the millions of mankind that shall be able to disobey the summons, for the living shall start and be changed, and the dead rise at the sound. But for what purpose shall they rise? It is in order that they may come to judgment. “*For we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, and must give an account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil.*”—*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.*”—“*And I*

saw (says the Apostle) the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works; and the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell (that is the place of departed spirits) delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to his works,"—and whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."—And I saw (continues the same Apostle) a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.—And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away.—And He that sat on the Throne said, Behold I make all things new."

In like manner we are told in another place, that "the heavens and the earth are but kept in store until the day of destruction and perdition of ungodly men;" and that when this "great and terrible day of the Lord" shall come, then "the very elements shall melt with fervent heat—the earth also, and all the works thereof shall be burnt up"—"the heavens shall depart as a scroll"—"they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shall they be changed;" and there shall then be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth

righteousness. Well might the Apostle say, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!"

There are many things spoken of in scripture that shall follow the grand scene of the Resurrection, which remain to be described; but we shall speak in this place only of one further point, and that is of the person who is to be our Judge. It will be Jesus Christ, "for the Father; (says the Scripture) "judgeth no man, for God hath committed all judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of Man." "This same Jesus," (said the angels just after his Resurrection) "which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Once he was "despised and rejected of men;" "he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth;" he was "mocked, and buffeted, and spit upon;" he was himself arraigned before the bar of Pontius Pilate, and he was hung upon the Cross, as if he was the vilest malefactor, the whole multitude having joined in crying, Crucify him, Crucify him.—But now, "Behold he cometh in the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all nations of the earth shall wail because of him." For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels

in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;” now also he is “*come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.*” Some men think that to forget or to disobey Christ is no great matter; they are good, as they call it, in their own way, and therefore they are satisfied. But such men should be reminded that it is not at the bar of their own reason, nor even at the bar merely of their own consciences that they are to be tried, but that they are to be tried at the bar of Jesus Christ. “*The word that I have spoken to you,*” (said our Saviour to the Pharisees) “*it shall judge you at the last day.*” Let us further enquire, then, what Christ hath spoken to us and what the Scripture in general hath said respecting the manner of our trial on the day of judgment, for this is the way in which alone we can truly know whether we shall be acquitted or condemned.

A N H Y M N

On the Second Coming of Christ.

LO! He comes in clouds descending,
 He that was for sinners slain;
 While the host of Saints attending
 Swell the triumph of his train!

Every eye shall now behold him;
 Every creature bend the knee:
 They that mock'd him too and sold him,
 Pierc'd and nail'd him to the tree.

See, the Angels all adore him!
 Hark, the trump proclaims the day!
 All the nations stand before him,
 Heaven and earth are fled away!

Come, thou Saviour long expected,
 Sit on thine eternal throne!
 Thou that wast by man rejected,
 Claim the kingdom for thine own.

E N D O F P A R T I.

