

## SERMON XLI.

The Session of CHRIST at GOD's right-hand explained and applied, being the third Step of his glorious EXALTATION.

HEB. i. 3.

*When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high.*

CHRIST being returned again to his Father, having finished his whole work on earth, is there bid by the Father to sit down in the seat of honour and rest. A seat prepared for him at God's right hand, that makes it honourable; and all his enemies as a footstool under his feet that makes it easy. How much is the state and condition of Jesus Christ changed in a few days! Here he groaned, wept, laboured, suffered, sweat, yea, sweat blood, and found no rest in this world, but when he comes to heaven, there he enters into rest. Sits down for ever in the highest and easiest throne, prepared by the Father for him when he had done his work. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down," &c.

The scope of this epistle is to demonstrate Christ to be the fulness of all legal types and ceremonies, and that whatever light glimmered to the world through them, yet it was but as the light of the day-star, to the light of the sun.

In this chapter, Christ the subject of the epistle, is described; and particularly, in this third verse, he is described three ways.

*First*, By his essential and primeval glory and dignity, he is *απαυγασμα*, the brightness of his Father's glory, the very splendor of glory, the very refulgency of that son of glory. "\* The primary reason of that appellation is with respect to his eternal and ineffable generation, light of light, as the Nicene creed expresses it. As a beam of light proceeding from the sun. And the secondary reason of it, is with respect to men," for look as the sun communicates its light and influence to us by its beams, which it projects; so doth God communicate his goodness, and manifest himself to us, by Christ. "Yea, he is the *express image*, or character of his person. Not as the impressed image of the seal upon the wax, but as the engraving in the seal itself†." Thus he is described by his essential glory.

\* *Ratio appellationis primaria est respectu Patris celestis a quo ab æterno, per ineffabilem generationem instar luminis, de lumine respenderit, secundaria respectu hominum, &c.* Glass. Rhet. p. 174.

† *Χαραττειν inscribere dicitur, non tam imaginem ex sigillo ceræ impressam, quam ipsum sigillum denotare.* Glass. Rhet. sac. p. 159.

*Secondly*, He is described by the work he wrought here on earth, in his humbled state, and it was a glorious work, and that wrought out by his own single hand, “When he had by himself purged our sins.” A work that all the angels in heaven could not do, but Christ did it.

*Thirdly*, and lastly, He is described by his glory, the which as a reward of that work) he now enjoys in heaven. “When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” i. e. the Lord clothed him with the greatest power, and highest honour, that heaven itself could afford; for so much this phrase of “sitting down on the right-hand of the Majesty” imports, as will appear in the explication of this point, which is the result of this clause, viz.

*Doct. That when our Lord Jesus Christ had finished his work on earth, he was placed in the seat of the highest honour, and authority; at the right-hand of God in heaven.*

This truth is transformingly glorious. Stephen had but a glimpse of Christ at his Father’s right hand, and it caused “his face to shine, as it had been the face of an angel,” Acts vii. 56. This, his high advancement, was foretold and promised before the work of redemption was taken in hand, Psal. cx. 1. “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right-hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” And this promise was punctually performed to Christ, after his resurrection and ascension, in his supreme exaltation, far above all created beings, in heaven and earth, Eph. i. 20, 21, 22. We shall here open two things in the doctrinal part, viz. What is meant by God’s right-hand; and what is implied in Christ’s sitting there, with his enemies for a footstool.

*First*, What are we to understand here by God’s right hand\*? It is obvious enough, that the expression is not proper, but figurative and borrowed. God hath no hand, right or left; but it is a condescending expression, wherein God stoops to the creature’s understanding, and by it he would have us understand honour, power, and nearness.

*First*, The right hand is the hand of honour, the upper hand, where we place those whom we highly esteem and honour. So Solomon placed his mother in a seat at his right hand, 1 Kings ii. 19.

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\* The right-hand of God denotes divine honour and glory, on which the Son of God, who existed before all ages, as God, in the highest, co-essential with the Father, and incarnate in the latter times, sat down with his glorified body. *Damasc. lib. 4. c. 2. de orth. fide.*

So, in token of honour, God sets Christ at his right hand; which, on that account, in the text, is called the right-hand of *Majesty*. God hath therein expressed more favour, delight, and honour to Jesus Christ, than ever he did to any creature. "To which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou on my right-hand?" Heb. i. 13.

*Secondly*, The right-hand is the hand of power: we call it the *reapon hand*, and the *working hand*. And the setting of Christ there, imports his exaltation to the highest authority, and most supreme dominion. Not that God the Father hath put himself out of his authority, and advanced Christ above himself; no, "for in that he saith he hath put all things under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him," 1 Cor. xv. 27. But to sit as an enthroned king at God's right-hand, imports power, yea, the most sovereign and supreme power; and so Christ himself calls the right-hand at which he sits, Matt. xxvi. 64. "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right-hand of power."

*Thirdly*, And as it signifies honour and power, so nearness in place, as we use to say, *at one's elbow*, and so it is applied to Christ, in Psal. cx. 5. "The Lord at thy right-hand, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath," i. e. the Lord, who is very near thee, present with thee, he shall subdue thine enemies. This then is what we are to understand by God's right-hand, honour, power, and nearness.

*Secondly*, In the next place let us see what is implied in Christ's sitting at God's right-hand, with his enemies for his footstool. And, if we attentively consider, we shall find that it implies and imports divers great and weighty things in it. As,

*First*, It implies the perfecting and completing of Christ's work, that he came into the world about. After his work was ended, then he sat down and rested from those labours, Heb. x. 11, 12. "Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices: which can never take away sins: but this man when he had once offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Here he assigns a double difference betwixt Christ and the Levitical priests; they stand, which is the posture of servants; he sits, which is the posture of a Lord. They stand daily, because their sacrifices cannot take away sin; he did his work fully, by one offering; and after that, sits or rests for ever in heaven. And this (as the accurate and judicious Dr. Reynolds \* observes) was excellently figured to us in the ark, which was a lively type of Jesus Christ, and particularly in

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\* Dr. Edward Reynolds, on Psalm cx. p. 55, 56.

this, it had rings by which it was carried up and down, till at last it rested in Solomon's temple, with glorious and triumphal solemnity, Psal. cxxxii. 8, 9. 2 Chron. v. 13. So Christ, while he was here on earth, being anointed with the Holy Ghost and wisdom, went about doing good, Acts x. 38. and having ceased from his works, did at last enter into his rest, Heb. v. 10. which is the heavenly temple, Rev. xi. 19.

*Secondly*, His \* sitting down at God's right-hand, notes the high content and satisfaction of God the Father in him, and in his work. "The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right-hand;" the words are brought in as the words of the Father, welcoming Christ to heaven; and (as it were) congratulating the happy accomplishment of his most difficult work. And it is as if he had said, "O my Son, what shall be done for thee this day? Thou hast finished a great work, and in all the parts of it acquitted thyself as an able and faithful servant to me; what honours shall I now bestow upon thee? The highest glory in heaven is not too high for thee; come sit at my right-hand." O how well is he pleased with Christ, and what he hath done! He delighted greatly to behold him here in his work on earth, and by a voice from the excellent glory he told him so, when he spake from heaven to him, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," 2 Pet. i. 17. And himself tells us, John x. 17. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life," &c. for it was a work that the heart of God had been set upon from eternity. He took infinite delight in it.

*Thirdly*, Christ's sitting down at God's right-hand in heaven, notes the advancement of Christ's human nature to the highest honour; even to be the object of adoration to angels and men. For it is properly his human nature that is the subject of all this honour and advancement; and being advanced to the right-hand of Majesty, it is become an object of worship and adoration. Not simply, as it is flesh and blood, but as it is personally united to the second person, and enthroned in the supreme glory of heaven.

O here is the mystery, that flesh and blood should ever be advanced to the highest throne of majesty, and being there installed in that glory, we may now direct our worship to him as *God-man*; and to this end was his humanity so advanced, that it might be adored and worshipped by all. "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son,

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\* They are said to sit down, who rest from their labour, and thereby refresh themselves, Gen. xviii. 1. in which sense some understand what is said of Christ. To sit at God's right-hand, i. e. in the heavens, to rest in that eternal blessedness with God, from these labours and miseries to which he voluntarily subjected himself for us. *Raran. on the word to sit.*

“even as they honour the Father.” And the Father will accept of no honour divided from his honour. Therefore it is added in the clause, “He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him,” John v. 22, 23. Hence the apostles, in the salutations of their epistles, beg for grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ; and in their *valedictions*, they desire the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to the churches.

*Fourthly*, It imports the sovereignty and supremacy of Christ over all. The investiture of Christ, with authority over the empire of both worlds: for this belongs to him that sits down upon his throne. When the Father said to him \* Sit at my right-hand, he did therein deliver to him the *dispensation* and *æconomy* of the kingdom. Put the awful sceptre of government into his hand, and so the apostle interprets and understands it, 1 Cor. xv. 25. “He must reign till he have put all his enemies under his feet.” And to this purpose, the same apostle accommodates, (if not expounds) the words of the Psalmist, “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels,” i. e. in respect of his humbled state on earth, “thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet,” Heb. ii. 7, 8. He is over the spiritual kingdom, the Church, absolute Lord there, Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. He is also Lord over the providential kingdom, the whole world, Psal. cx. 2. And this providential kingdom, being subordinate to his spiritual kingdom; he orders and rules this, for the advantage and benefit thereof, Eph. i. 22.

*Fifthly*, To sit at God’s right-hand with his enemies for a footstool, *implies Christ to be a conqueror over all his enemies*. To have his enemies under his feet, notes perfect conquest and complete victory. As when Joshua set his foot upon the necks of the kings: So Tamerlane made proud Bajazet his footstool †. They trampled his name, and his saints under their feet, and Christ will tread them under his feet. It is true indeed this victory is incomplete and inconsummate; for now “we see not yet all things put under him, (saith the apostle) but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour,” and that is enough. Enough to shew the power of his enemies is now broken; and though they make some oppo-

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\* Therefore this sitting down of Christ at the Father’s right-hand, does not signify properly that glory and essential kingdom which was common to the Son of God with the Father from eternity, for in this respect even the Holy Spirit sits at the right-hand of God; but the *æconomical* and voluntary kingdom, over which he is appointed as Θεαβρωπος, i. e. God-man and Mediator by the Father, for the gathering in and defending of his church. *Synops. pur. Theol. Disp.* 28. p. 543.

† The man who so often terrified the city of Constantinople, was a dog and a footstool under Tamerlane. *Aurel. Vect.*

sition still, yet it is to no purpose at all; for he is so infinitely above them, that they must fall before him; it is not with Christ as it was with Abijah, against whom Jeroboam prevailed, because he was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them. His *incapacity* and *weakness* gave the watchful enemy an advantage over him. I say, it is not so with Christ, he is at God's right-hand. And all the power of God stands ready bent to strike through his enemies, as it is, Psal. cx. 5.

*Sixthly*, Christ's sitting in heaven notes to us the great and wonderful change that is made upon the state and condition of Christ, since his ascension into heaven. Ah, it is far otherwise with him now, than it was in the days of his humiliation here on earth. *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* Oh, what a wonderful change hath heaven made upon him! It were good (as a \*Worthy of ours speaks, to compare in our thoughts the abasement of Christ, and his exaltation together; as it were in columns, one over against the other. He was born in a stable, but now he reigns in his royal palace. Then he had a *manger* for his cradle, but now he sits on a chair of state. Then oxen and asses were his companions, now thousands of saints, and ten thousands of angels minister round about his throne. Then in contempt, they called him the *Carpenter's son*, now he obtains a more excellent name than *angels*. Then he was led away into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, now it is proclaimed before him, "let all the angels of God worship him." Then he had not a place to lay his head on, now he is exalted to be heir of all things. In his state of humiliation, "he endured the contradiction of sinners;" in his state of exaltation, "he is adored and admired by saints and angels." Then "he had no form or comeliness; and when we saw him, there "was no beauty, why we should desire him:" Now the beauty of his countenance shall send forth such glorious beams, as shall dazzle the eyes of all the celestial inhabitants round about him, &c.

O what a change is this! Here he sweated, but there he sits. Here he groaned, but there he triumphs. Here he lay upon the ground, there he sits in the throne of glory. When he came to heaven, his Father did as it were thus bespeak him.

My dear Son, *what an hard travail hast thou had of it? What a world of woe hast thou passed through, in the strength of thy love to me and mine elect? Thou hast been hungry, thirsty, weary, scourged, crucified, and reproached: Ah, what bad usage hast thou had in the ungrateful world! Not a day's rest for comfort since thou wentest out from me; but now thy suffering days are accomplished; now thy rest is come, rest for evermore. Henceforth sit*

at my right-hand. Henceforth thou shalt groan, weep, or bleed no more. Sit thou at my right-hand.

Seventhly, Christ's sitting at God's right-hand, implies the advancement of believers to the highest honour: For this session of Christ respects them, and there he sits as our representative, in which regard we are made to sit with him in heavenly places, as the apostle speaks, Eph. ii. 6. How secure may we be (saith Tertullian) who do now already possess the kingdom? meaning in our Head, Christ. This (saith another) is all my hope, and all my confidence, namely, that we have a proportion in that flesh and blood of Christ, which is so exalted, and therefore where he reigns, we shall reign; where our flesh is glorified, we shall be glorified. Surely, it is matter of exceeding joy to believe that Christ our Head, our flesh, and blood, is in all this glory at his Father's right-hand. Thus we have opened the sense and importance of Christ's sitting at his Father's right hand. Hence we infer,

*Inference 1.* Is this so great an honour to Christ, to sit enthroned at God's right hand? What honour then is reserved in heaven for those that are faithful to Christ, now on the earth? Christ prayed, and his prayer was heard, John xvii. 24. "That we may be with him to behold the glory that God hath given him;" and what heart can conceive the felicity of such a sight? It made Stephen's face shine as the face of an angel, when he had but a glimpse of Christ at his Father's right hand. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty," Isa. xxxiii. 17. which respected Hezekiah in the type, Christ in the truth. But this is not all, though this be much, to be spectators of Christ in his throne of glory; we shall not only see him in his throne, but also sit with him enthroned in glory. To behold him is much, but to sit with him is more. I remember it was the saying of a heavenly Christian, now with Christ, *I would far rather look but through the hole of Christ's door, to see but one half of his fairest and most comely face, [for he looks like heaven] suppose I should never win to see his excellency and glory to the full; than to enjoy the flower, the bloom, and chiefest excellency of the glory and riches of ten worlds.* And you know how the Queen of the South fainted at the sight of Solomon in his glory. But this sight you shall have of Christ, will change you into his likeness. "We shall be like him (saith the apostle) for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. He will place us as it were in his own throne with him. So runs the promise, Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh, I will grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne:" and so 2 Tim. ii. 12. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." The Father set Christ on his right-hand, and Christ will set the saints on his right hand. So you know the sheep are placed by the an-

gels at the great day, Mat. xxv. and so the church, under the figure of the daughter of Egypt, whom Solomon married, is placed “on the king’s right hand, in gold of Ophir,” Psal. xlv. This honour have all the saints. O amazing love! What, we set on thrones, while as good as we by nature howl in flames! O what manner of love is this! These expressions indeed do not intend that the saints shall be set in higher glory than Christ; or that they shall have a parity of glory with Christ, for in all things he must have the pre-eminence: But they note the great honour that Christ will put upon the saints; as also, that his glory shall be their glory in heaven. “As the glory of the husband redounds to the wife; \* and again, their glory will be his glory, 2 Thess. i. 10. and so it will be a social glory. O, it is admirable to think, whither free grace hath already mounted up poor dust and ashes!

To think how nearly related now to this royal, princely Jesus! But how much higher are the designs of grace, that are not yet come to their parturient fulness, they look beyond all this that we now know! “Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” 1 John iii. 2. Ah what reason have you to honour Christ on earth, who is preparing such honours for you in heaven.

*Inf. 2 Is Christ Jesus thus enthroned in heaven, then how impossible is it, that ever his interest should miscarry or sink on earth?* The church hath many subtle and potent enemies. True, but as Haman could not prevail against the Jews, whilst Esther their friend spake for them to the king, no more can they whilst our Jesus sits at his, and our Father’s right hand. Will he suffer his enemies that are under his feet, to rise up and pull out his eyes, think you? Surely they that touch his people touch the very apple “of his eye,” Zech. ii. 8. “He must reign till his enemies are put under his feet,” 1 Cor. xv. 25. The enemy under his feet, shall not destroy the children in his arms. He sits in heaven on purpose to manage all to the advantage of his church, Eph. i. 22. Are our enemies powerful; lo our King sits on the right-hand of power. Are they subtle and deep in their contrivance; He that sits on the throne, overlooks all they do. Heaven overlooks hell. “He that sits in heaven beholds,” and derides their attempts, Psal. ii. 4. He may permit his enemies to straiten them in one place, but it shall be for their enlargement in another. For it is with the church, as it is with the sea: what it loses in one place, it gets it another; and so really loses nothing. He

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\* *Uxor splendet in radiis mariti.*



may suffer them also to distress us in outwards, but shall be recompensed with inward and better mercies; and so we shall lose nothing by that. A footstool you know is useful to him that treads on it, and serves to lift him up higher; so shall Christ's enemies be to him and his, albeit they think not so. What singular benefits the oppositions of his enemies, occasion to his people; I have \* elsewhere discovered, to which I may refer my reader; and pass to

*Inf. 3.* Is Christ set down on the right-hand of the Majesty in heaven? *O with what awful reverence should we approach him in the duties of his worship!* Away with light and low thoughts of Christ. Away with formal, irreverent, and careless frames in praying, hearing, receiving, yea, in conferring and speaking of Christ. Away with all deadness, and drowsiness in duties; for he is a *great King* with whom you have to do. A king, to whom the kings of the earth are but as little bits of clay. Lo, the angels cover their faces in his presence. He is an adorable Majesty.

When John had a vision of this enthroned King, about sixty years after his ascension; such was the over-powering glory of Christ, *as the sun when it shineth in its strength*, that when he saw him, he fell at his feet as dead, and died it is like he had, if Christ had not laid his hand on him, and said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," Rev. i. 17, 18. When he appeared to Saul in the way to Damascus, it was in glory above the glory of the sun, which overpowered him also, and laid him as one dead upon the ground.

O that you did but know what a glorious Lord you worship and serve. Who makes the very *place of his feet glorious*, wherever he comes. Surely *He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him.* There is indeed a *παρρησια* boldness or free liberty of speech allowed to the saints, Eph. iii. 12. But no rudeness or irreverence. We may indeed come, as the children of a king come to the father, who is both their awful sovereign, and tender father; which double relation causes a due mixture of love, and reverence in their hearts, when they come before him. You may be *free*, but not *rude*, in his presence. Though he be your Father, Brother, Friend; yet the distance betwixt him and you is *infinite*.

*Inference 4.* *If Christ be so gloriously advanced in the highest throne †, then none need to reckon themselves dishonoured, by suffer-*

\* A Saint indeed.

† It is no disgrace for us to suffer what Christ suffered, nor is it any glory for you to do what Judas did. *Hieronym.*

*ing the vilest things for his sake* \*. The very chains and sufferings of Christ have glory in them. Hence Moses "esteemed the very reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," Heb. xi. 26. He saw an excellency in the very worst things of Christ, his reproaches and sufferings, as made him leap out of his honours and riches, into them. He did not, (as one saith) only *endure the reproaches of Christ*, but counted them *treasures*. To be reckoned among his honours and things of value. So Thuanus reports of Ludovicus Marsacus, a noble knight of France, when he was led with other martyrs, that were bound with cords, to execution; and he for his dignity was not bound, he cried, give me my chain too, let me be a knight of the same order †. Disgrace itself is honourable, when it is endured for the *Lord of Glory*. And surely there is (as one phraseth it) a little paradise, a young heaven, in sufferings for Christ. If there were nothing else in it, but that they are endured on his account, it would richly reward all we can endure for him; but if we consider how exceeding kind Christ is to them, that count it their glory to be abased for him; that though he be always kind to his people, (yet if we may so speak) he overcometh himself in kindness, when they suffer for him; it would make men in love with his reproaches.

*Inf. 5. If Christ sat not down to rest in heaven, till he had finished his work on earth; then it is in vain for us to think of rest, till we have finished our work, as Christ also did his.*

How willing are we to find rest here! To dream of that, which Christ never found in this world, nor any ever found before us. O think not of resting, till you have done working and done sinning. Your life and your labours must end together. "Write (saith the Spirit) blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours," Rev. xiv. 13. Here you must have the *sweat*, and there the *sweet*. It is too much to have two heavens. Here you must be content to dwell in the *tents of Kedar*; hereafter you shall be *within the curtains of Solomon*. Heaven is the place of which it may be truly said, that *there the weary be at rest*. O think not of sitting down on this side heaven. There are four things will keep the saints from sitting down on earth to rest, viz. grace, corruption, devils and wicked men.

*First, Grace* will not suffer you to rest here. Its tendencies are beyond this world. It will be looking and longing for the blessed hope. A gracious person takes himself for a pilgrim, seeking a better country, and is always suspicious of danger in every place and state. It is still beating up the sluggish heart with such lan-

\* Dr. Manton on Jam. p. 228.

† *Cur et non me quoque torque donas? Et insignis hujus ordinis militem creas?* Thuan. Hist.

guage as that, Mic. ii. 10. "Arise, depart, this is not thy rest, "for it is polluted." Its further tendencies and continual jealousies, will keep you from sitting long still in this world.

*Secondly*, Your *corruptions* will keep you from rest here. They will continually exercise your spirits, and keep you upon your watch. Saints have their hands filled with work by their own hearts every day. Sometimes to prevent sin; and sometimes to lament it. And always to watch and fear, to mortify and kill it. Sin will not long suffer you to be quiet, Rom. vii. 21, 22, 23, 24. And if a bad heart will not break your rest here, then,

*Thirdly*, There is a busy devil will do it. He will find you work enough with his temptations and suggestions, and except you can sleep quietly in his arms as the wicked do, there is no rest to be expected. "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist," 1 Pet. v. 8.

*Fourthly*, Nor will his servants and instruments let you be quiet on this side heaven. \* Their very name speaks their turbulent disposition. "My soul, (saith the holy man) is among lions, and "I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of "men, whose teeth are spears and arrows," Psal. lvii. 4. Well then, be content to enter into your rest, as Christ did into his. He sweat, then sat, and so must you.



## SERMON XLII.

CHRIST'S Advent to Judgment, being the fourth and last Degree of his Exaltation, illustrated and improved.

ACTS x. 42.

*And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.*

**C**HRISt enthroned in the highest glory in heaven is there to abide for the effectual and successful government, both of the world, and of the church, until the number given him by the Father, before the world was, and purchased by the blood of the cross, be gathered in; and then cometh the judgment of the great day, which will perfectly separate the precious from the vile; put the redeemed in full possession of the purchase of his blood in hea-

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\* רשע *Inquietum esse. Turbulentus.*