

when the foolish virgins came with the despairing cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" the door stubbornly refused to open, while from within came the death-knell of departing hope—"Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

#### IV. IT SHALL BE PUNISHMENT.

The Scriptures teach "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust," (Acts xxiv. 15); that following the resurrection there shall be a general judgment, when "every one" shall "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This teaching commends itself to every enlightened conscience. That goodness should be rewarded and wickedness punished, is a proposition that has the force of an axiom. It harmonizes with the eternal *oughtness* of things. In every man good or evil predominates; but as all men are free agents, good or evil must be voluntary. Voluntary goodness deserves reward; voluntary badness deserves punishment. Hence the argument which gives goodness a reward beyond the grave, gives wickedness punishment beyond the grave. There is a future state of reward for the righteous: *therefore*, there is a future state of punishment for the wicked.

1. *The punishment shall be exceedingly terrible.*—I do not infer this, as it is often said the Churches do, from the dramatic pictures of Pollock or Milton; I infer it from the clear and solemn statements of the Word of God. And I would remind the thoughtful reader that the most terrible utterances in the New Testament concerning the punishment of the lost, came from the lips of Him whose pitying tenderness brought Him from heaven to earth to die for the sins of mankind. Such words from His lips are not mere rhetorical flourishes, but sober statements of solemn realities. It is sometimes said that Christ's words are figurative, and should not be interpreted literally. That may be true in many instances, but a figure implies a reality behind it, and in this case a reality far more dreadful than the figure by which it is set forth. It is idle to speculate as to whether the punishment shall be corporeal, or whether the instruments of that punishment shall be material substances: enough to know that something unspeakably dreadful must be intended