

LECTURE XI.

THE FUTURE CONDITION AND DESTINY OF THE EARTH.

MAN has a stronger desire to penetrate the future than the past. And yet the details of most future events are wisely concealed from him. There are two, and only two, sources of evidence from which he can obtain some glimpses of what will be hereafter. The one is revelation, the other analogy. So far as God has thought proper to reveal the future, our information is precise and certain. But it does not embrace a multitude of events about which we have strong curiosity. By analogy is meant a prediction of the future from the past. On the principle that nature is constant, we infer what will be from what has been. If, however, new laws are hereafter to come into operation, or if present agencies will then operate very differently from what they now do, it is obvious that analogy can be only an imperfect guide. Still, in respect to many important events, its conclusions are infallible. Judging, for instance, from the past, we are absolutely certain that no living thing will escape the great law of dissolution, which, thus far, apart from the few exceptions made known to us by revelation, has been universal.

The future changes in the condition of the earth, as they are taught us by revelation and analogy, or, rather, by geology, will form the subject of my present lecture. And my first object will be, to ascertain, if possible, precisely what the Bible teaches us concerning these changes.

We find in the Scriptures several descriptions, more or less definite, of the changes which this globe will hereafter undergo. Some of them, however, are couched in the figurative language of prophecy, and others are incidental allusions; and concerning the precise meaning of such descriptions, there will, of course, be a diversity of opinion.