

CHRIST WILL BE ALL IN ALL

Chapter 4

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

As stated previously, the error into which the carnal mind falls is a *misconception* of how God will achieve His benevolent ends. Often, when people are confronted with God's intention to gather all things into Christ at the end of the ages, they assume it is being said that there is no hell, no judgment, and no wrath upon the ungodly. Brethren, let me solemnly declare I am saying no such thing. We must ever seek out the whole counsel of God, and the Bible undeniably presents the element of righteous judgment, and indeed severe judgment. However, the *nature* and *purpose* of these judgments have long been twisted and perverted by centuries of religious dogma, and many of our traditional doctrines are based on mistranslated words and misapplied parables and metaphors.

HELL

So much of the orthodox perception of judgment is bound up in this place called 'Hell'. The glory of Christ's atonement has sadly been largely ignored in favor of an unbiblical game of Heaven and Hell, which operates on many of the same principles as 'Snakes and Ladders'. Conversions are attempted on the basis of "where would you rather go?" as if Christians are selling timeshares in Acapulco rather than freely stating the Good News of Jesus Christ.

But what is this hell? Is this place really the fiery inferno of Dante? Has God really created a place where the majority of His creatures will be tortured in hideous fashion without end? Brethren, the import of the answers to these questions is profound. If tradition has deceived us, and if we have not comprehended what God is saying by the Spirit, we may well find ourselves in the awful position of proclaiming God's love to consist of the most unloving act possible (ceaseless torture) – or that God is divided against Himself, having opposing streaks of love and justice that cannot be harmonized. Bearing this in mind, let us give our very hearts to the seeking out of God's truth!!!

The original old English word 'hell' was derived from the Saxon word 'helan' (to cover), and referred to a 'hidden place' or 'covered place'. It is commonly applied to four words from the scriptures: Sheol, Hades, Tartaroo, and Gehenna. Sheol and Hades are the same place in Hebrew and Greek – the abode of the dead, or the state of the dead. There is nothing of endless punishment in the Sheol/Hades scriptures, nor indeed any glimpse of the ever popular 'hellfire'. This is, rather, more of a place of darkness. Indeed, Sheol is just as commonly translated as 'grave' in the Old Testament.

Tartaroo is used only once, and that by Peter when describing the angels who fell being reserved in chains of darkness. The Greek word denotes something along the lines of incarceration, and is not accurately translated 'hell'.

THE VALLEY OF HINNOM

It is with Gehenna, however, that we are primarily concerned in this particular study. This is the 'fiery hell' of religious mythology, and within this mistranslation many hidden truths have remained concealed for long centuries.

Gehenna was actually a real valley (Ge-Hinnom 'Valley of Hinnom') located to the Southwest of Jerusalem. The valley is mentioned thirteen times in the Old Testament, usually as 'the valley of the son of Hinnom'. During the course of time, apostate Israel began sacrificing to a pagan god named Molech. This abominable deity was fashioned with a man's body and bull's head, and burnt offerings were presented into his outstretched hands – and the ceremonial customs of Molech-worship involved human sacrifices. His belly was heated up and babies were placed in his fiery hands. God warned His people not to be found in such detestable practices:

²¹And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 18:21)

But eventually, despite this solemn command, corrupt kings of Israel did honor Molech, including David's own son, Solomon:

⁶Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. (1 Kings 11:6-7)

Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, probably the most evil king to sit on the throne of Judah, sacrificed his own son to the demonic entity:

.⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶Also *he made his son pass through the fire*, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. (2 Kings 21:5-6)

When the righteous young king Josiah took the throne in around 640 BC, he desecrated Topheth, the place within the valley where the altar was:

¹⁰And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son^[el] of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech. (2 Kings 23:10)

And thus, the valley of Hinnom became the city garbage dump, a place where all the filth and sewage of Jerusalem was taken to be discarded. Because of the impurity, a constant fire was kept burning, and dead animals and executed criminals were often thrown into the flames. Thus, we begin to see how the place would have been regarded by the Jews to whom Jesus spoke – a place of filth, punishment and degradation. It is very important to realize when studying this subject of Gehenna, that it is never mentioned to the Gentiles! Only two men in the Bible spoke of Gehenna, and they were Jesus and His half brother James (who wrote his epistle to the Jews). The apostle Paul, who set sound doctrine among the churches, *never alludes to Gehenna!* The book of Acts, containing many stories of the early church missionaries, *never mentions it!* It is easily determined that Gehenna was a *parable* for the Jews, not the Gentiles!

In examining this, let us look at a passage where Jesus mentions Gehenna:

³¹"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. ³³Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of Gehenna? (Matthew 23:31-33)

Now, most versions of the Bible, as we have seen, erroneously interpret Gehenna as 'hell', so it is assumed that Jesus is speaking regarding the Pharisees going to hell to be tormented for ever and ever. However, we must remember that these are the same Pharisees of which Jesus later said, at the cross:

³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."^[h] (Luke 23:34)

It is important to understand that the reality of Jesus words bespoke an impending time of national judgment upon the Jews. In 70 AD, the Romans raised Jerusalem to the ground (after the Christians, heeding the prophecy of Jesus, escaped), and slaughtered its inhabitants. It is believed that the bodies of many of the dead Jews were thrown into the valley of Hinnom. Thus, we see that the words of Christ concerning their judgment were fulfilled in a very literal manner!

SYMBOLIC JUDGMENT

However, though we see the national judgment poured out upon the Jews, where they experienced Gehenna in a very real sense, it is important to note that the parables of Jesus also offer a deeper, underlying *symbol* of God's judgment upon His people. Understand that Jerusalem, the Holy City, is a type of the dwelling place of God among His people. Let us look at the Gehenna-antitype in the book of Revelation:

¹⁹And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who

worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:19-21)

^(A) ⁷Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where^[b] the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God,^[c] and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.^[d] ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:7-15)

It is important, firstly, to make something absolutely clear – Revelation is a self-proclaimed book of *symbols*.

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John... (Revelation 1:1)

Types, symbols, and signs are given to illustrate spiritual truths. Thus, if we see a ten-headed beast appear on the scene, we should not be looking for the ugly brute to arise literally at the climax of this age, lamenting his tenfold hairdressing bill. If we find a seal put on the foreheads of God's servants, we should not expect to be visibly 'tagged on the noggin' any time soon. And Saints, if we see a lake of fire, especially a lake of fire that has the power to destroy Death and Hades, we should certainly, unequivocally, NOT be looking for a literal, fiery lake! We must learn the spiritual language of God! Let us always remember that admonishment of Paul, who by the Spirit declares that God:

⁶...also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit;^[a] for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Men have twisted this word of God into such ruin, because they take the wrong passages literally and the wrong passages symbolically. Paul can state as clear as a bell that he trusts in the Living God, "WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL MEN, ESPECIALLY

THEM THAT BELIEVE’, and religion finds ways to dull the beautiful clarion call of that eternal message. But, given symbols concerning fire and brimstone, the carnal mind has been quick to ‘keep the letter of the law’, and thus the terrible lie of eternal torment has been given birth. Saints of God – we must humbly recognize that the Word of God is only revealed by His Spirit:

¹³These things we also speak, *not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy^[d] Spirit teaches*, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:13-14)

I truly imagine that if an unbeliever read the Bible, he would see the doctrine of eternal torment. He would read and comprehend with the natural mind, reason with his human intellect, and thus, arrive at a carnal conclusion. Does this itself not tell us that the truth must be deeper, wider, and higher? The truth must be beyond the discernment of the natural, revealed only in the Holy Spirit! We have just read Paul boldly declare by the Spirit that *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, nor can he!!!!* Brethren, I implore you to think deeply upon this scripture. The Word of God has been handled with such casual arrogance, with so little supplication to it’s writer as to the revelation of what He has written, that it is high time we all repented and acknowledged that the truth is only discernable in the Spirit – and thus, we must humble ourselves before our Maker and ask for aid in seeking out the sublime wonders of His Word.

SPIRITS OF JUDGMENT AND BURNING

Returning to the theme at hand, it is vitally important that we understand something concerning these parables and symbols. Fire, in prophetic language, is a symbol for JUDGMENT. Behold:

³And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy--everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. ⁴When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, ⁵then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. (Isaiah 4:3-5)

He will purge His own holy people by a *spirit* of judgment and burning! Let me clearly state, for emphasis, that our judgment is *spiritual*, and our ‘burning’ is a *spiritual refinement!* Dear Saint – meditate upon the many scriptures where Christ is declared to be a refiner of gold and silver. Let us also remember what He said to the church at Laodicea:

¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; (Revelation 3:18)

It would be ludicrous to suggest that the fire our Lord refers to is anything but *spiritual*. The church at Laodicea, having worldly wealth, is declared to be poor, and Christ advises them to buy the true gold – the nature of Christ, which we can only be conformed to by the fire of affliction, as we experience the fellowship of His sufferings.

Let's look again at His judgment upon *His own people*:

¹¹For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

Now this 'Day' Paul speaks of will be expounded upon in later chapters, but suffice to say at this juncture, we can see fire and burning again being used with regards to God judging His own people. None of the religious folks ever suggest that we believers will all be thrown into a literal fire to test our works, yet that symbolic 'lake of fire' is REAL and LITERAL to them! They really see a Lake, in their minds eye, with fire rising up instead of serene water, and hideously tormented humans instead of fish and old Wellington boots! Saints of God, I declare again that we must learn to understand the spiritual language of God, else we will never be able to search out the secret mysteries of Him who will be All in all. We must see in the fires of prophecy, the Holy One Who Judges Righteously, and in beholding His judgments, we must perceive the *destruction of the carnal man!* Listen to the Spirit speak through the prophet Isaiah:

**²⁷Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar,
Burning with His anger,
And His burden is heavy;
His lips are full of indignation,
And His tongue like a devouring fire. (Isaiah 30:27)**

**³³For Tophet was established of old,
Yes, for the king it is prepared.
He has made it deep and large;
Its pyre is fire with much wood;
The breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone,
Kindles it. (Isaiah 30:33)**

**¹⁴The sinners in Zion are afraid;
Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:
"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?
Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14)**

We again see Topheth (in Gehenna) used as a symbol of judgment, this time against the king and nation of Assyria (another strong type and anti-type used in prophecy, for the carnal man and the pride of man). And again, we see the ‘sinners in Zion’ – God’s own hypocritical, backsliding people, fearful of Him scripture calls both ‘devouring fire’ and ‘everlasting burnings’. We see God’s very breath described as ‘brimstone’!!! Can we not see that these are symbols? Believe me, Saints, the judgment and righteousness of God is very, very real, and I would never seek to de-emphasize His just punishment of the carnal man in any way. But we must understand the language God uses is not intended to be taken literally, but it must be comprehended with the spiritual mind!

²"I have loved you," says the LORD.

"Yet you say, "In what way have You loved us?"

Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"

Says the LORD.

"Yet Jacob I have loved;

³But Esau I have hated,

And laid waste his mountains and his heritage

For the jackals of the wilderness." (Malachi 1:2-3)

We must understand the spiritual import of such declarations as these. Esau here is a symbol for the *carnal man*, and Jacob for the *new creature in Christ*. Understand that Jacob was as sinful as his brother, deceptive and cunning. Yet God laid hold of him and gave him a new name (nature) – ‘Israel’. The story of Esau and Jacob is a beautiful lesson on symbology that could be expanded upon in greater depth, but let us simply state here that we see that the primary judgment and wrath of God is against the carnal, unregenerate man, and that man shall cease from the earth utterly, becoming ashes under the feet of the righteous, who have gone through the fires of judgment to that very end!

FOR EVER?

One major issue regarding the judgments of God, and a rallying point for those who believe in a ceaseless hell, are the many places where punishment is said to be ‘for ever’, or ‘for ever and ever’. However, when we delve into the Hebrew and Greek, we find that the words so translated are actually far more ambiguous than our English perception of ‘for ever’.

The Greek word used to denote ‘for ever’ (and justify the doctrine of eternal torment) is ‘aionos’. This is derived from the word ‘aion’ which generally is an ‘age’, or sometimes a ‘world’. The corresponding word in the Hebrew scriptures is ‘olam’ which refers to a concealed, or hidden time. The general intent of this word is to describe *a time of indefinite, lengthy duration*, very similar to the English word ‘perpetual’ in some ways. Taking a look at some of the places where these words are found, we can easily determine that they do not mean ‘for ever’ in our sense of the expression:

**⁶I went down to the moorings of the mountains;
The earth with its bars closed behind me *forever*;
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, (Jonah 2:6)**

Here we see Jonah referring to his time in the belly of the whale as ‘for ever’. Yet this was only a seventy-two hour period! Of course, if we see ‘for ever’ as a ‘lengthy time of indefinite duration’, for ever makes perfect sense! It is interesting also to note that after ‘for ever’, Jonah declares that God had brought him back up “from the pit”! This is a foreshadowing of God’s ultimate mercy upon all mankind.

There are a multitude of examples as to the mistranslation of ‘aionos’, but we will let another two suffice for now:

²³For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. ²⁴And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons *forever*. (Exodus 12:23-24)

The Passover has clearly and undeniably been fulfilled by Jesus Christ the true sacrificial lamb, and yet here we see the Lord God telling the Israelites that the Passover shall be observed as an ordinance ‘for ever’. Are we to believe that we will keep the Passover ceaselessly, though the true Passover lamb is among us? We are still going to sacrifice animals as an ordinance without end?

Later in Exodus we find a law of God concerning slavery:

⁵But if the servant plainly says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free," ⁶then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him *forever*. (Exodus 21:5-6)

Are we to believe that the slaves who so loved their masters are doomed to serve them for all eternity? Of course not! Thus, we begin to see behind the curtain of our translation errors. Brethren, there are ‘scholars’ on both sides of this issue, but rather than add up the letters after all of their names to see which side wins, I would admonish you to pray that the Spirit may open your eyes as to the meaning of this word.

JUDGED BY THE TWO EDGED SWORD

An extremely important point to hold in full view is that of *who judgment is committed to*. In what manner is God taking vengeance, and using what instruments and vessels?

²¹For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²²For the Father judges no one, *but has committed all judgment to*

***the Son,* ²³that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 5:21-23)**

“ ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe,^[a] because our testimony among you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

In these two passages we see very clearly that the Father has committed ALL judgment to the Son, Jesus Christ, with the intent that ALL should honor Christ even as they love the Father. As we marvel at that awesome purpose for judgment, we then see the Lord taking vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel, in flaming fire. In the book of Revelation we find the great symbol of Christ's judgment – the two edged sword:

¹⁶He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Revelation 1:16)

¹²“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, “These things says *He who has the sharp two-edged sword*: ¹³“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.^[a] ¹⁶Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. (Revelation 2:12-16)

¹⁵Now out of His mouth goes a sharp^{gl} sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:15)

²¹And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:21)

Brethren, this is a very important issue. We have here a two edged sword that appears again and again in scripture, obviously symbolic, and seen coming out the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ in judgment. This is a key that unlocks a very beautiful truth indeed. Let us first identify the sword:

¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

The Bible interprets itself so clearly here! The two edged sword, is the Word of God! Hence, it comes out of the mouth of the Christ, and we also see why it is a sword of judgment, because it can pierce even to the division of soul and spirit, and discerns all thoughts and intents of the heart! What a perfect instrument of judgment! Awake, and see the spiritual truth evident here! And Saints, were that not enough, we see the two edged sword appear again in the second to last Psalm, shedding even more light on the judgment of God:

**⁵Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
⁶Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
⁷To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
⁸To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
⁹To execute on them the written judgment--
This honor have all His saints.
Praise the LORD! (Psalm 149:5-9)**

What glory! This same sword of judgment, this piercing Word of God, is committed to the Saints of the Most High! It is they, the corporate Body of Christ, ruled and governed by the perfect Head, who are given the judgment, the vengeance, and the punishment of the nations! The World shall be judged by the Word!

Having understood this, O Saint of God, consider carefully. If the punishment of the unrighteous is simply to be tossed into a burning lake, what “honor” is this to us Saints? And what does that have to do with wielding the two edged sword of His word? Brethren, we must see with spiritual eyes and be babes no more. In the words of Paul, by the Spirit:

²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Corinthians 2:6)

Not only the nations, but angels, shall be judged by the saints! And yes, those same angels that the Spirit speaks of in the second chapter of the second book of Peter. Surely we can begin to see that the judgments of God, as committed to His Son and the Body of His Son, are something to be hoped for?

**⁹With my soul I have desired You in the night,
Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early;
For when Your judgments are in the earth,
The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (Isaiah 26:9)**

The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness! That is a beautiful promise, and it comes as a result of these judgments.

**⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (Psalm 19:9-10)**

Again, we see the harmony and beauty of God's judgements. They are to be *desired!* Did we not earlier hear the Christ admonish a church to buy that gold refined in the fire? Shall we not glorify God for His judgments, that bring life? Praise His name!!!

CONCLUSION

Saints, recognizing and seeking out the judgments of God is an important aspect of our faith. We must understand the nature and purpose of God's chastisements, and we must also never detract from His wrath, be it ever so severe. And we must rejoice as we see the veil pulled back, little by little, and we behold the desirability and magnificent perfection of His judgments. What honor is ours when we realize that the judgment of the world shall be committed to us! The Body of Jesus Christ, ruled by our blessed Lord Himself!