

THE SECRET OF HIS PURPOSE .... THE PLAN FOR THE FULLNESS OF THE TIMES  
**TO HEAD UP ALL THINGS IN THE KING,**  
EVERYTHING IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH,  
**IN JESUS....**

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#58

***Judgment of All***

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This article is about the judgment of God as presented mostly through the lens of what is commonly called the *new testament*, which is based on the Greek language. At the outset, it needs to be understood that there are many judgments in scripture, and, as tempting as it might be, we must avoid linking all of them together into one doctrinal system or systematic theology. As one commentator has remarked, we need to be careful to distinguish them as to time, place, participants, and the circumstances surrounding them, that is, their context. Judgments can be individual or national, in this life or after resurrection; the results can be loss or reward.

To this end, what follows does not piece together God's many judgments; rather, it simply reveals the various judgments of God based on His love for all and His ultimate purpose to be All in all. Whether judgment occurs in this life or after resurrection, we can be assured there is a Divine heart and purpose in it. *For when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9). God so loves the world (John 3:16)!*

In the English language, the word *judgment* means "to decide, govern, decree, form an opinion, hear, discern, and settle a controversy." In a sense, it is a neutral word, for it does not indicate outcome of the decision or settlement of the controversy; this is determined by the context associated with its use. The outcome could be good or bad. The same could be said about the Greek words that are translated into various forms of judgment in scripture.

On the grand scale, there is most definitely a controversy between mankind (the nations) and God. However, there is good news; this controversy is unequivocally and irrevocably settled in His Son, our Lord Jesus. In Christ, all controversies are settled. On much smaller scales, there have been and will continue to be controversies that God has settled and will settle through His judgments that range from death of individuals to death of whole cities or nations and the systems upon which they rest. Historically, this is seen in the destruction of the ancient cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Jerusalem, and the kingdoms of ancient Babylon, Israel, and Judah.

Note: throughout the following, in order to provide contextual clarity in quoting scripture, Greek words are inserted within [brackets].

**Greek Words for *Judge, Judgment***

In the Greek, the root word for *judge* is the verb *krinō* (G2919), meaning "to judge, decide; that is, act as judge." According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, from *krinō* comes *krisis* (G2920), meaning "a decision, judgment"; *krima* (G2917), meaning "a judgment"; *kritikos* (G2924), meaning "critical: - able to judge"; *kritēs* (G2923), meaning "a judge"; *kritērion* (G2922), meaning "a law court"; and *diakrinō* (G1252), meaning "to distinguish, to judge, to discern, to make distinctions."

Note the similarity to our English words: *crisis*, *crime*, *critical*, and *criteria*. Also, note that there is no direct indication of the exact nature or, we could say, outcome built into each definition; the distinction or decision made could be favorable or unfavorable. The outcome is explained through context or qualifiers attached to these words.

Thus, inherent in the word *judgment* is a sentence or determination that could range from a light (e.g., few stripes) to a severe (e.g., many stripes) sentence, even unto physical death, or to no sentence at all, perhaps, even a good reward or blessing. Further, the word *judgment* does not define the length of time of the sentence. This too must be qualified.

These words are translated into a variety of words, depending on the interpretative bias of the translators. Those with a biblical view of the lost (unbeliever) being tortured and tormented in man's eternal toaster called *hell* might use words such as *damnation* and *condemnation*, implying all is lost in judgment. To prove the point; the English definition of *damnation* is "condemnation to endless punishment, as in hell." Surely, this implies a total, irrevocable, unending loss.

For example, the *King James Version* [KJV] quotes Jesus in Matthew 23:33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape *the damnation [krisis] of hell [gehenna]*?" According to this bias, there is no hope whatsoever for the Pharisees, a thought that has carried over to much Christian teaching of our day regarding the lost. But, should it be carried over, or should it simply be left to the time, place, participants, and context as presented? The latter is proposed.

A more literal rendering is: "Serpents! brood of vipers! how may ye escape from *the judgment [krisis] of the gehenna*?" (*Young's Literal Translation* [YLT]). There is far less, if any, bias in this translation, for the word *gehenna* qualifies the judgment or explains what the judgment is. If Jesus had stopped at the word *judgment*, then all we would know is that a judgment would come, but its character or result would be unknown. However, in this case, Jesus spoke of a judgment that led to capital punishment, meaning death (but not eternal torture). This death occurred in 70 AD as Jerusalem was totally destroyed and over a million Jews killed and thousands sold as slaves by the Roman army that, by the way, was sent by God. Jesus made this perfectly clear in His parable of the marriage feast. *But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire* (Matthew 22:7). This was fulfilled in the generation of Jesus' first advent and speaks nothing of the eternal destiny of the recipients of this judgment, as if it were an endless punishment in hell.

As with most biases, the subject gets skewed in a certain direction. The KJV skews it in the direction of no hope whatsoever. The YLT leaves it more open, for the use of the word *judgment* does not qualify the judgment; it is left to the word *gehenna*. In other words, *gehenna* defines the judgment and leaves the word *judgment* more neutral. In order to understand Jesus' warning, one must understand the word *gehenna*. Unfortunately, many Christians do not understand it due to interpretative bias and bad doctrine or, as Paul calls it, *the systematizing of the deception* (Ephesians 4:14 *Concordant Literal New Testament* [CLV]).

Another KJV bias toward *damnation* is discovered in John 5:29 where it refers to *the resurrection of damnation [krisis]*. Applying the various meanings of the word *judgment*, it could more accurately be called *the resurrection of crisis, of judgment, of decision, or of turning*. It implies a

point of decision, a crisis point in one's life. When a judgment comes, a decision comes forth for or against, and this, in turn, brings about a turning point. According to God's judgment, when a judgment is favorable, it results in reward; when it is unfavorable, it results in loss, but not endless torture. From God's perspective, it is always based on His divine law and His mercy, not on some capricious law set by man.

Again, the KJV offers another interpretative bias that leads many astray from the truth of God's will to save all mankind. *But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal [aiōnios] damnation [krisis]* (Mark 3:29 KJV). This implies that there is a judgment that results in one being damned forever. The more literal translations use the expression *eonian judgment* [CLV], *aionian judgment* [WED], or *age-during judgment* [YLT]. So, on the one hand, the KJV indicates that it is an endless judgment in hell (based on the word *damnation*); on the other hand, the more literal translations indicate a judgment that lasts for an age or ages, meaning it is limited in duration. However, to add to the confusion, in some translations, the word *sin* is used instead of the word *judgment*. Two examples are the *New American Standard Bible* [NASB] and the *Weymouth New Testament* [WNT] that, by the way, are translated from a different set of ancient manuscripts than used by the KJV. They read *eternal sin* [NASB] and *sin of the Ages* [WNT], respectively. Even these present us with a challenge, for one is endless and the other is limited by the ages, unless one defines *eternal* as "ages."

Sorry for adding confusion upon confusion, but it should awaken all who proclaim with great bravado that the book we call the *Bible* is the "inspired word" of God. At best, we have God's ancient word translated by men who, although they might have been honest in their endeavor to translate, nonetheless, were still men with many weaknesses and biases. This writer is no exception to this either.

### ***Kata* Judgment**

Now, in the Greek, there are other words that do indicate what could be called *an adverse judgment*. When the prefix *kata* is added to a Greek word, it generally intensifies the meaning of the word. In the case of *judgment*, we discover the words *katakrima*, *katakrino*, and *katakrisis*. Note that these are based on the *judgment* words *krima*, *krino*, and *krisis*. All three *kata* words refer to an adverse judgment or judgment against, and are most commonly translated into the words *condemned* or *condemnation*, which most often speak of physical death. Some examples...

The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment [*krima*] arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation [*katakrima*], but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ... So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation [*katakrima*] to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. (Romans 5:16, 18 NASB)

Notice how Paul starts with judgment and then presents two outcomes; one leads to death for all mankind and the other leads to life for all mankind. All mankind was condemned to physical death due to Adam's one transgression, and all mankind is brought out of this death sentence and into life through the last Adam, Jesus the Savior of the world. This is the glory of the gospel.

We all still die but ultimately death is abolished by the consummation of the ages (1 Corinthians 15:26).

"The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment [*krisis*], and will condemn [*katakrino*] it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Matthew 12:41 NASB)

The judgment of condemnation must refer to the second death (of works, flesh) emanating out of the final judgment of all.

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn [*katakrino*] Him to death.... (Matthew 20:18 NASB)

By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned [*katakrino*] the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (Hebrews 11:7 NASB)

In both verses, the condemnation refers to physical death. Jesus was crucified, and all in Noah's day, except Noah and his immediate family, were killed by the great flood.

For if the ministration of condemnation [*katakrisis*] be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. (2 Corinthians 3:9 KJV)

If something that brings the death sentence is glorious, won't something that makes us acceptable to God be even more glorious? (2 Corinthians 3:9 CEV)

A paraphrased translation is used to help make the point. When Moses received the law, his face shone with glory, but the law also produced death for those unable to keep all the law. Thus, that which came in glory also condemned or led to death.

These few examples should suffice to make the point that the intensified forms *most often* present the outcome of judgment as physical death and, by the way, never as eternal torture in a literal fiery hell, a so-called *afterlife* (i.e., in death) existence.

To add to this, let us consider other Greek words along this line.

### **Perish, Destroy, Lost**

The Greek word *apollumi* means "to destroy, utterly," and is translated into the words *perish*, *destroy*, and *lost*.

Probably, the most well-known verse containing this word is John 3:16: *Every one believing into him may not perish, but obtain aionian life* (WED). Or, from a more recent translation: *Everyone who believes in him should not be lost but should share in the life of God's new age* (Kingdom NT).

Of course, most mainstream translations use the phrase *eternal life*, which, in most minds, carries an entirely different concept than *aionian life*, or life in an age.

In this verse, Jesus is simply making the distinction between having a life in the age and ages to come and not having a life. Eternity, as most define it, is not in view, and there is no suggestion of an afterlife in hell for those who perish. Simply, the ones who perish are dead to the age(s) but not forever. In general, *apollumi* signifies a death, usually a literal physical death.

Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed [killed] [*apollumi*] by the destroyer.  
(1 Corinthians 10:10 NASB)

The ancient sons of Israel were literally killed by serpents.

And the chief priests and the elders did persuade the multitudes that they might ask for themselves Barabbas, and might destroy [kill, crucify] [*apollumi*] Jesus.... (Matthew 27:20 YLT)

This one is quite obvious. Jesus was crucified (died) on the cross and suffered and overcame death for all mankind.

"But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed [*apollumi*] those murderers and set their city on fire." (Matthew 22:7 NASB)

This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD when God sent the Roman army to destroy Jerusalem by fire and kill over a million apostate (fallen away) Jews.

And coming near, His disciples aroused Him, saying, Lord, save us! We are perishing [drowning] [*apollumi*]. (Matthew 8:25 LITV)

The disciples actually thought they were going to drown to death.

But rather go to the lost [*apollumi*] sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 10:6 LITV)

In 721 AD, the house of Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians and scattered among the nations, never to regain their national identity as Israel. They died as a nation. Thus, Jesus was not referring to physical death of individuals; He was referring to a national death or destruction. This concept is made clear elsewhere.

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish [*apollumi*]." (John 11:49-50 NASB)

In this case, the nation in view was not the entire house of Israel but rather the house of Judah. At any rate, the Jewish elite were concerned that their nation would be destroyed or lost. Again, the same concept is seen in the following verse.

'But, if thy right eye doth cause thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast from thee, for it is good to thee that one of thy members may perish [*apollumi*], and not thy whole body be cast to gehenna. (Matthew 5:29 YLT)

*Gehenna* signified national judgment of Jerusalem and Judah that occurred from 66-73 AD. It was a death of their city as well as their entire religious system called *Judaism*. Jesus prophesied it would happen, and it did (Matthew 22:7). The epistle to the Hebrews was a warning that Judaism was about to fall, and the Hebrews needed to come out of it and stay out of it. In this case, the members were not parts of one's body but rather individual Jews. It was as if Jesus said: "Cast out the tares (apostate Jews) so the wheat (sons) can be gathered into the barn." This is the lesson of *the kingdom of the heavens* parables of Matthew 13. (Contrary to so much eschatological teaching, it seems apparent that even *Revelation* was a warning that Jerusalem, the mother of all harlots, was about to fall.)

'And be not afraid of those killing the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather Him who is able both soul and body to destroy [*apollumi*] in gehenna.' (Matthew 10:28 YLT)

This verse can be viewed as a national death as well; however, Jesus made the point that God can kill both soul and body. Some of the Jews in that day erroneously believed in the pagan view that the soul is immortal, which it is not. Rather than refute their error, He simply made the point that God could (and would) kill them just as anyone else could kill them. They were not about to get a free pass on the basis of their bloodline, that is, as so-called *chosen people* simply because they came from the right gene pool. Unfortunately, they did not heed Jesus' warning and many did indeed suffer the fate of death at the hands of the Roman general Titus.

"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses [*apollumi*] his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25 NASB)

Finally, this verse speaks of losing one's soul life. It is generally thought that this speaks of dying to one's self life, but it could also have been an encouragement to those who were about to face martyrdom. After all, the book of Revelation was a special encouragement for those who were about to be martyred.

Moving on...

### **Wrath of God—Passion of Love**

Some might reply: What about the wrath of God, isn't God so angry at sinners that He is determined to torment them forever? Not really! We must not look at the wrath of God in the same light as the wrath of man. In his rage, man often seeks to destroy and "to get even." God's wrath has no such quality. His wrath is judicial and corrective. It is true that no one is able to stand in the wrath of the Lambkin (Revelation 6:16-17), but what does this mean?

First of all, His wrath is not eternal, for when the seventh angel pours out the bowl of wrath, the pronouncement goes forth: *It is done* (Revelation 16:17).

Second, and most importantly, God's wrath is driven by the passion of love. Consider what Elwin R. Roach in his online posting *Hell & the Lake of Fire* has to say about the word *wrath* in light of "Christ's blazing passion and unwavering strength."

"The most common word used by the *King James Bible* that relates to such passion is "WRATH." Wrath, however, does not convey the best thought for the Greek word, which is "ORGE." ... Strong's Exhaustive Concordance tells us that *ORGE* means: "*desire, (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy) violent passion....*" If we follow the word to its derivatives, we see it is akin to "*airo*." This word implies *a deliverance from sin*, and is comparable to "*ornis*," which means "*a bird (as rising in the air)*."

It is active. It reaches out and accomplishes the burning desire of the soul, whatever it may be. The passion (*orge/wrath*) we see in the scriptures is usually in the context of heated determination.

Wrath in the Biblical sense is not a condition of rage, as the word implies in the English, but is generally associated with adamant punishment toward those in rebellion; yet it does not end with punishment alone. We see that it ends in deliverance, especially at the judgment of the Last Death, the Lake of Fire.

The passion of Christ, the wrath of the Lamb, is no doubt grievous to the carnal man, for it means the end of his lustful, self-indulging life. It is similar to a father's wrath when he punishes his rebellious son. It is not enjoyable to either of the two, yet it is done with understanding and in love, knowing the pain is but for a season and very necessary for the spirit of rebellion to be broken. This is in all of God's judgments toward His fallen creation."

Now, wrath and vengeance are closely related, as evidenced in Paul's quote from Hebrew scripture.

If possible, from you being in peace with all men; not avenging yourselves, beloved, but giving place to wrath [*orge*], for it has been written, "Vengeance [*ekdikesis*] is Mine," "I will repay," says the Lord. *Deut. 32:35* (Romans 12:18-19 LITV)

Notice how Paul introduces the concept of wrath [*orge*] and links it to God's vengeance. We often think of the word *vengeance* as if one wants "to get even." This is man's way, but is it God's way? No!

The Greek word for *vengeance* is *ekdikesis*, which means "vindication, retribution, punishment." The word *vindicate* means "to defend or maintain (a cause, claim, etc.) against opposition; to serve as justification for; justify; to claim or establish possession of." The word *vindication* means "a vindicating; justification; a fact of circumstance that vindicates or justifies; assertion or maintenance, as of a claim." The word *retribution* means "deserved punishment for evil done, or, sometimes, reward for good done; merited requital."

Given these definitions, perhaps God's word could be amended to say: "I am justified in taking the action I am taking. As the creator of all, I have a passionate claim on my creation, especially

on mankind." There is no sense that God is out "to get even." Simply, He has a claim on man and a right to take action against opposition to Himself. But this does not imply, in any sense, that this vengeance involves an eternity of torment or, even, torture. The words *justification* and *justify* appearing in the above definitions should draw our minds to Paul's teaching on the salvation of all mankind: *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men* (Romans 5:18 NASB).

There are two more significant verses that use the word *vengeance*.

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29-31 NASB)

I tend to think that Paul wrote this, and if not, at least someone very close to him. To be sure, there are many schools of thought on this verse, but it seems clear, given the context of the epistle, that it deals with Hebrew Christians reverting back to Judaism entirely or blending Judaism with Christianity in such a way as to remove or lessen the power of the cross and the blood of Jesus. Obviously, the blending would be to believe in the blood of Christ, at least, in some measure, while continuing with the animal sacrifices and the priesthood associated with them. Paul faced a similar challenge with the Galatians over the matter of circumcision.

But, notice that in the above verses the vengeance of God is linked to the fact that the Lord will judge His people. The people in view are the Hebrews and, by extension, we could say, the Jews. In that day, they were known as the Lord's people, and they would be judged if they rejected Christ, the one offering them justification of life. The fact of the matter is that many (only the Lord knows how many) of the so-called *Lord's people* in that day rejected Jesus, and they were judged by the *gehenna of fire* in 70 AD as God destroyed Jerusalem and Judaism along with it. It truly is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God, even for the Lord's people.

The same concept is discovered in Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians. Keep in mind that Paul, as well as others in Judea, were being hounded by the Jews (Lord's people) who rejected Christ.

For, brothers, you became imitators of the assemblies of God being in Judea in Christ Jesus, because you also suffered these things by your own fellow countrymen, as they did also by the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, also having driven us out, and not pleasing God, and being contrary to all men, hindering us from speaking to the nations in order that they be saved, to the filling up of their sins always. But the wrath to the end is come on them. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 LITV)

The wrath of God was on the Jews in that day, and this wrath grew to a crescendo during the siege of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas by the Romans from 66-73 AD.

Since it is a just thing with God to pay back tribulation to the ones troubling you, and to give you, those being afflicted, relief with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with angels of His power, in flaming fire giving full vengeance [*ekdikesis*] to those not knowing God, and to those not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Isa. 66:15; Jer. 10:25* who will pay the penalty: everlasting [*aionian*] destruction from the face of the Lord, "and from the glory of His strength," *Isa. 2:19* when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe in that Day, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 LITV)

It is recognized that many see these verses as relating to what is called the end-time or the end of this age or the world. A discussion of the various schools of thought on the end-time is beyond the scope of this article, so we will leave it. However, it does seem that Paul (1 Thessalonians 1:10), Peter (1 Peter 4:7), and James (James 5:8-9) had a sense that there was wrath (judgment) in the air, so to speak, and it was coming in their generation, just as Jesus had told His disciples, as recorded by Matthew, especially in Matthew 24.

Before moving on, there is one more thing to keep in mind. It is vital that we not take man's fleshly wrath and vengeance and assign it to God as if His wrath and vengeance are the same, for they are not. All that God does emanate out of His very nature, which is love, and love conquers all and never fails. God's love knows perfect justice! To reiterate, God's love may lead to severe action on His part; it may even be quite painful and ruinous to some, perhaps many, at least in the short haul, but love is patient, bears all things, and never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). *God is love* (1 John 4:8, 16) will ultimately turn every heart back to Himself so that He may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28) in His entire creation. Glory to God!

### **Judgment Proportional to the Crime**

Probably, one of the most difficult aspects of explaining the judgment of God is the sentence or outcome of His judgments. It is not difficult from the perspective of the law of God. It is difficult because of the tradition of men (Mark 7:8) that has been taught to so many to the point that, again, it has become part of the systematizing of the deception (Ephesians 4:14 CLV) about which Paul warns the ecclesia.

The problem comes from the pagan view of hell held by so many believers and the world, for that matter. Rather than confronting man's hell, let us look at God's law and His judgments, for if we understand this, we will see the outright lie and deception of the hell that man has created in his own image and assigned to a loving and just God who loves the world.

The key to understanding the outcome of judgment is in what Paul tells us: *For the wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23). Under the divine law of God given to Moses, the worst penalty for sin or disobedience was death, usually by stoning. Some sins resulted in the *dead* body being burned (Joshua 7:25), which Jesus referred to as *the gehenna of fire* (Matthew 5:22 YLT).

Now, if the penalty for sin is death, why is it that so many preachers today tell us that the wages of sin is torture forever and ever and ever in a place of literal fire and worms called *hell*? Is this not worse than death? What makes it even worse is we are told that sinners of all kinds will be

cast into this torturous hell-hole that is more horrific than anything the terrorists of our day could conjure up. Included in this group are sinners that were never given the opportunity to hear of Jesus. To make it even more grotesque, many say God is love but, in His love, He must judge by casting them into this existence of never-ending torment.

Ask yourself: Where in scripture does it ever say that a sinner must be tortured forever for his or her sins? If the divine law of God never demanded it, why do we think it will emanate out of the final judgment of all?

As a side note, I most often use the word *torture* instead of *torment* because the modern-day concept of *hell* is depicted as extreme torture of body and soul, not simply torment of the soul. One simply needs to read sermons by Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, J. Furniss, E.B. Pusey, John Hagee, and others to prove the point. If you are interested in earlier sources of a torturous hell, then read the *Inferno* by the Catholic poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) or *Paradise Lost* by the English poet John Milton (1608-1674). Besides, *torture* is included in the definition of *torment*.

Here is something else to contemplate: If man's concept of hell is true, then where is Jesus today? As the teaching goes, hell is eternal. But wait a minute; Jesus paid the penalty for the sin of the world. If He paid the penalty and if the penalty is an eternal existence of torture, then does it not follow that He is still there suffering for us endlessly? Do you see the slippery slope that has been created by man's concept of a hell?

Now, here is the real kicker. If Jesus paid the *maximum* penalty for the sin of the whole world (all humanity) by dying on a cross and then He was raised up from among the dead to live forevermore, how is it that one individual cast into hell will end up paying far more for his own sin than Jesus paid for all sin? Even worse, how is it that a person cast into an eternal hell will never, ever, ever pay for his or her sins? According to this thinking, the wages of sin is eternal torture.

It is recognized that some teach that hell is simply about man being separated from God forever and this will be his torment. According to this thinking, death is a spiritual death, meaning lost mankind will be alive in some existence apart from God, and their souls will be tormented for their loss; this is their hell. It is as if the so-called *lost* will be some place in God's creation outside His realm and control. Where is this in scripture? Besides, does this make any sense to you? What is God going to do, build some cosmic chain-link fence around someplace in the universe and cast the lost in it and then lock it with a cosmic padlock? Is it a black hole? Is it a fiery planet? Is it a parallel universe? However, the most pressing question is: How will God the Father ever be all in all in His entire creation as long as one single soul exists in His creation apart from His life? If any of this were true, then don't you think Hebrew scripture would have left us some clue? Why didn't God tell Adam of this torturous hell that awaited the bulk of his descendants? This question could be asked in relation to all the great men of old. The law of God given to Moses demanded an "eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth," meaning there was a just payment for crimes committed against one another. Further, the law of restitution (Exodus 21-23) makes it very clear that God's righteous law demands that things be made right. Consider Jesus' word on the matter.

"Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent."  
(Matthew 5:26 NASB)

"And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."  
(Luke 12:47-48 NASB)

"A flogging," "many lashes," "few lashes," and "last cent" all speak of a limited outcome resulting from judgment. For some, including whole nations, such as the bad fig tree of Judah in Jesus' day, it is weeping and gnashing of teeth and outer darkness—exclusion from Christ's kingdom for a season (Matthew 8:10-12; 13:40-42, 49-50; 22:12-14; 24:48-51; 25:29-30; Luke 13:26-30; Revelation 22:14-16) that leads to death of the soul-life of carnal man—death of carnal flesh.

The purpose or goal of God's judgment is restitution, chastening, and correction, not torture, and, through this process, one learns the righteousness and love of God.

For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and He scourges [flogs] every son whom He receives (Hebrews 12:6), for God so loves the world (John 3:16).

The Father's discipline, especially of those going on to sonship in His kingdom, can be quite severe. The word *scourge* means "to flog." In other words, the Father's discipline can involve a flogging for those He has called and chosen to be placed as sons in His kingdom. So, no one is truly exempt from God's loving judgment. Keep in mind; the Father has the long view in mind, and this relates to His ultimate purpose of ALL. All are destined to be in love with God.

At this point, we cannot proceed any further without addressing the one verse that many claim is about eternal punishment, in contrast to eternal life.

### **Eonian Chastisement**

Some might challenge all that has been presented so far based on Jesus' judgment of the sheep and goat nations. After all, doesn't Jesus tell us that there will be eternal (i.e., endless) punishment for the goat nations? Not exactly! He speaks of eonian or age-during chastisement. To understand what follows, please check out this link:

*Eternity or Ages?—Eternal or Eonian?* — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art57.html>

In the following, take note of the difference between the two sets of translations. The first set of verses [KJV; NASB] makes the punishment endless, and the second set [CLV; WED; WNT; YLT] makes it aionian (eonian) or for the age(s).

Two so-called *traditional translations* read...

And these shall go away into everlasting [*aiōnios*] punishment [*kolasis*]: but the righteous into life eternal [*aiōnios*]. (Matthew 25:46 KJV)

"These will go away into eternal [*aiōnios*] punishment [*kolasis*], but the righteous into eternal [*aiōnios*] life." (Matthew 25:46 NASB)

Four so-called *literal translations* read...

And these shall be coming away into chastening [*kolasis*] eonian [*aiōnios*] yet the just into life eonian [*aiōnios*]. (Matthew 25:46 CLV)

And these shall go forth to aionian [*aiōnios*] cutting-off [*kolasis*]; but the righteous to aionian [*aiōnios*] life. (Matthew 25:46 WED)

"And these shall go away into the Punishment [*kolasis*] of the Ages [*aiōnios*], but the righteous into the Life [*zoe*] of the Ages [*aiōnios*]." (Matthew 25:46 WNT)

And these shall go away to punishment [*kolasis*] age-during [*aiōnios*], but the righteous to life [*zoe*] age-during [*aiōnios*].' (Matthew 25:46 YLT)

Use of the words *eonian*, *aionian*, and *age-during* indicate something related to time or ages and not to unending or eternal.

The key to understanding this verse is discovered in the Greek word *kolasis* and its root word *kolazo*. The *New Englishman's Greek-English Concordance & Lexicon* (Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1982) defines *kolasis* as "penal punishment," and is most often translated as *punishment*, although other translations use the words *pain* (BBE; WNT) or *torment* (DNT; KJV) instead of *punishment*. *Kolasis* is derived from the Greek root word *kolazo*, which means "to curtail; thus, to prune; figuratively to chastise, restrain." Take special note of "to prune" that implies a process of removing or cutting back so that new growth can come forth. *Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit* (John 15:2 NASB).

*Kolazo* is discovered in only Acts 4:21 and 1 John 4:18. We'll only look at Acts, leaving 1 John for another time.

But having threatened them again, they released them, finding nothing as to how they might punish [*kolazo*] them, on account of the people, because all glorified God on the thing happening. (Acts 4:21 LITV)

Obviously, this punishment was not torture or eternal; the punishment they sought was more like teaching them a lesson or making a point. We could say it was more of a chastening or a restraining, a means to get them to stop what they were doing.

But the Lord knows to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unjust for a day of judgment [*krisis*], being punished [*kolazo*].... (2 Peter 2:9 LITV)

Peter makes no implication as to the outcome of this punishment. It is simply reserved for a day of judgment.

From these definitions and the above verses, there are two points that need to be stressed.

First, once again, the judgment of God is eonian or age-during, meaning it is limited in duration, not eternal or endless. Although not the subject of this article, this is a vital key to understanding the lake of fire, the second death.

Second, as shown, the root word from which the word *punishment* is derived carries the meaning of chastisement for the purpose of correction, not endless torture. It is a restraining or even a pruning, a cutting off of dead or non-productive material. Granted there might be some, perhaps much, torment in it, but it is not torture and it is not endless. When a parent punishes a child, isn't it normally for the purpose of correction, to change the child's behavior? This is the same picture we should get when we consider God's punishment. Again, there is a limit to the punishment or chastisement. The reason it is eonian is because only God knows how long it will last, for the punishment always fits the crime. But be assured; it will come to an end when the demand of God's law is fulfilled and the heart is turned to God, or at creation's grand jubilee when all debt is cancelled, whether it has been paid in full or not.

Putting off the old self and putting on the new self (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10) is the life of a conqueror (saint) while in a mortal body, but those who are not conquerors in life will be raised up for the final judgment in order to deal with unsettled matters. This is why there is a final judgment in the first place. Simply, some matters cannot and will not be settled in this life, such as unbelief and murder, and only God can resolve them through His loving discipline. This is why it is better to believe in this age, to die to self, to forgive all debts, and to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (Romans 13:8). The final judgment of mankind is designed to restore harmony, to reconcile the entire creation of God, and to bring all things back to God's lawful order. Making all things right! After all, Paul makes it very clear that all things will be reconciled to God. This is the glory of the cross!

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:19-20 NASB)

To this end, all judgment is designed to correct and to deal with all unsettled injustices. Every family in heaven and on earth derives its name from God the Father (Ephesians 3:14-15). As the Father of all, God's judgments are remedial and aimed at the correcting and turning of all His children back to Himself. Even His wrath is designed to remove the dross from a sinner's life, to restore and refine by fire, which is the consuming fire of God.

The fact of the matter is that every single one born of Adam's race is either being judged in life and/or will be judged after resurrection, and God's judgments can and will extend to whole nations and cities as they rise and fall by the hand of the Almighty. Let us not forget that judgment is not always related to punishment or correction; built into the idea of God's judgment is the matter of reward as well: *Well done, good and faithful servant.*

We must all appear before...

### **The *Bema***

Scripture is quite clear that all will be judged. This is readily seen in the Greek word *bema*. According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, the *bema* is "primarily, a step, a pace (akin to *baino*, to go), as in Acts 7:5, translated "to set (his foot) on," lit. 'foot-room,' was used to denote a raised place or platform, reached by steps, originally that at Athens in the Onyx Hill, where was the place of assembly; from the platform orations were made. The word became used for a tribunal, two of which were provided in the law-courts of Greece, one for the accuser and one for the defendant; it was applied to the tribunal of a Roman magistrate or ruler."

Thus, *bema* is related to a judicial process, as in a court of law or before a judge who must decide a case brought to him. The most profound and illegitimate judicial proceeding in the history of man was when Jesus stood before the judgment seat of Pilate.

While he was sitting on *the judgment seat [bema]*, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." (Matthew 27:19 NASB)

In another account, King Herod was on a judgment seat the day an angel struck him dead. Most translations use other words, such as *throne*, *rostrum*, or *tribunal*, but the Greek word is *bema*.

And on an appointed day Herod, clothing himself with royal apparel, and sitting on *the judgment seat [bema]*, was delivering an address to them. (Acts 12:21 EMTV)

Of course, these were earthly judgment seats with carnal men sitting upon them. However, Paul adds another dimension to the *bema*.

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat [*bema*] of God. (Romans 14:10 NASB)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat [*bema*] of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10 NASB)

Early in my Christian education, I was taught that the *bema* was exclusively for the Lord's people and that it represents a personal encounter of judgment between the Lord Jesus and His saints, and it was pretty much for rewards. In other words, the *bema* is strictly for believers. Based on further research, I am not so sure that this is the proper understanding of the judgment seat.

To the Corinthians, Paul wrote: *If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire* (1 Corinthians 3:15). Who is Paul speaking to in this verse? Is he speaking to believers or unbelievers? Perhaps, he is speaking to both. Clearly, Paul wrote to the saints in Corinth, but, in this verse, he refers to "any man," without qualification. Where in

scripture is judgment by fire referenced? It is in Revelation 20:11-15 where John saw a large white throne from which judgements are made for the small and the great. Isn't the great white throne judgment a bema? Of course!

Now, returning to the matter of *being saved, yet so as through fire*, to whom does this apply? Consider a word from Jesus about His servants.

"But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and *assign him a place with the unbelievers*. (Luke 12:45-46 NASB)

Where is the assigned place with the unbelievers? Could it be the final judgment given to us by John? Obviously, the thought of believers rising in a last resurrection, not prior ones, and facing the glorious throne of God is not mainstream thinking among believers.

Then I saw *a great white throne* and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were *judged [krino]* from the things which were written in the books, according to their *deeds*. (Revelation 20:11-12 NASB)

Could it be that the rest of the believers, along with the unbelievers, will be raised up on the last day to appear before the throne for judgment of works? It seems possible. The words *work* and *deeds* come from the same Greek word *ergon*, so we know that judgment by fire, the fiery word of God, is of *ergon* or *works*, not of man's physical body. Is it possible that believers whose names are in the book of life will suffer loss, *saved, yet so as through fire*, experiencing some facet of the second death (Revelation 2:11) but will receive the promise of immortal life and will enter into the kingdom, representative of New Jerusalem? Of course, it is possible. The challenge is that scripture does not help answer the question. God knows so we must entrust all this to Him.

As an aside, to answer the above, I believe one must first resolve one question: Is a believer, who Paul calls a *saint*, also a conqueror by definition? After all, Paul tells us that we are more than conquerors, as in completely victorious through the one who loved us (Romans 8:37). Or, is he only referring to those who victoriously come through the many trials he lists in the preceding verses? Obviously, there are two schools of thought on this matter. One says that all believers are conquerors; the other says that conquerors are a special subset of believers that rise above their brethren, even as firstfruits.

Personally, I believe the issue revolves around whether one is truly in Christ or not. After all, Paul says: *But you're not people of flesh; you're people of the spirit (if indeed God's spirit lives within you; note that anyone who doesn't have the spirit of the Messiah doesn't belong to him)* (Romans 8:9 Kingdom NT). Perhaps, the *if indeed* clause is our answer according to Paul. Could it be that some we consider to be believers are not truly in Christ? Outwardly, they profess to be believers

but inwardly (which only God sees) they are not. Could these apparent or so-called *believers* be the ones that are accounted with the unbelievers because this is their true inward condition?

Regardless of what conclusion one comes to over this matter, the point is that, however one views it, all mankind is destined for the judgment of God, whether it is called a *bema* or the *great white throne judgment*. All must appear before the judge of all. However, it seems that most of the judgment of conquerors occurs during their life in mortal bodies with their reward to follow them in the next age. They will have paid their dues, so to speak. This is most evident through Paul's testimony at the end of his life. There is a day coming.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. For the rest, the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me in that Day, and not only to me, but also to all the ones loving His appearance [to everyone who is eagerly waiting for him to come again]. (2 Timothy 4:7-8 LITV [GW])

At any rate, one thing we can be *absolutely* sure of is that the judge of all will judge righteously, impartially, equitably, and justly, and rewards will emanate out of the *bema*. Abraham knew this truth.

"Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25 NASB)

Now, what about judging one another? Is it true we are not to judge? This might seem to be out of context to the overall topic, but there is a connection, as is shown later. Hold on!

### **By Your Standard of Measure**

Jesus warns us to be careful about judging others. It is often said that because of His exhortation, we are not to judge anything in this life. But is this what He means?

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:1-5 NASB)

In these verses, the word for *judge* comes from the Greek word *krinō*. Jesus is not telling us not to judge. What He is telling us is not to judge by our own standard or, if you will, by man's carnal law.

Under the guidance of the spirit of the Lord, we are to judge ourselves not by man's law but by God's divine law that are written upon our hearts—and when we do, we will see what needs to be dealt with in our own lives, first and foremost. Only after we deal with our logs can we help anyone else with their specks. But the key to this judging is God's law, not man's law. What value

is it to measure by our own standard anyway? Do we, according to our own flesh, know how to judge properly? Hardly! We desperately need to know God's divine law, which is based on His love, grace, and mercy.

Now, here is a question for those who judge the lost or the unbeliever by telling them, in death, they are going to an existence of eternal torture that has been created according to man's standard: Do you want the judge of all to judge you according to this standard? If this is your standard of judgment, according to Jesus, He will judge you on this standard. Sobering, isn't it?

This alone should cause us to stay away from the modern-day concept of hell. Isn't it far more important to exemplify the love of God in word and in deed than to try to scare people into believing?

There is nothing about hell that speaks of God's love for the world. God's chastening may be painful to the soul for some, perhaps many, as the carnal flesh is brought into death; however, it is not designed to kill (as in annihilate completely) them but rather to heal them and restore them to be all that they were made to be, in the image of *Elohim*. If God does not do this for all mankind, without exception, then He cannot and will not be All in all.

Now, here is the connection to us judging in this day. The...

### **Saints Shall Judge**

Consider Paul's word to the Corinthians about the saints judging or discerning the world and the angels in the age(s) to come. Who will judge the world? Who will judge the messengers or angels? The saints will judge them.

Have ye not known that the saints shall *judge* [*krinō*] the world? and if by you the world is judged [*krinō*], are ye unworthy of the smaller *judgments* [*law courts*] [*kritēriōn*]? have ye not known that we shall *judge* [*krinō*] messengers? why not then the things of life? of the things of life, indeed, then, if ye may have *judgment* [*law courts*] [*kritēriōn*], those despised in the assembly—these cause ye to sit; unto your shame I speak: so there is not among you one wise man, not even one, who shall be able to *discern* [*judge*] [*diakrinō*] in the midst of his brethren! (1 Corinthians 6:2-5 YLT)

In these verses, Paul uses two similar words, *krinō* and *diakrinō*. The latter word means "to discern." By extension, it could be said that judging is discerning. But, for what purpose? It is for discerning the matter at hand in order to make correct judgments that lead to righteous conclusions. Where and when do you think the discerning judgment of the saints is going to take place?

First, the immortal, glorified conquerors of Christ will do it throughout the age that is coming as they sit upon the throne of Christ in His kingdom, meaning as they are manifestly (openly) reigning with Christ (Revelation 3:21).

Second, the conquerors will be the judges at the final judgment of all. Paul called the *ecclesia*, which is the body of Christ, the complement of Christ, meaning the body is His likeness and will join Him as He sums up or heads up all things in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:10, 22-23).

Third, this is the reason the law of God must be written on our hearts and in our minds. Only through God's word do we know righteousness, as well as unrighteousness, and how to judge others.

Because this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, giving My Laws into their mind, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Hebrews 8:10 LITV)

Moses prophesied of this truth.

And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. (Deuteronomy 33:2-3 KJV)

Notice that the saints are in His right hand, and going forth from His right hand is the fiery law of God. In other words, the fiery law will be written on the hearts of His saints, and they will go forth discerning the world and the angels for the purpose of subjecting all things unto Christ. It is a matter of...

### **Head and Body**

Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite [sum up; head up] all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ... And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church [*ecclesia*], which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:9-10, 22-23 ESV)

The foundation of God's plan is Christ as the head over all, meaning nothing is left out. Simply, His headship encompasses everything. God subjects all under the feet of Christ, making Him the universal head over all, who fills the entire universe. The purpose of subjecting all things under His feet, especially His enemies, is to bring order by making peace with all, to make even His enemies His friends. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them (2 Corinthians 5:19).

But there is a glorious mystery in this: In the capacity of head over all things, Christ has been given the *ecclesia*, which is His body, and the mystery of God's will is—the heading up of all things will be accomplished through Christ *and* His body, not just Christ alone.

Simply, Christ the head and His body are the means through which God will bring all in the heavens and on the earth into His kingdom of all new, which makes Christ and His body the essential centerpiece of God's plan.

Some interpretations of Ephesians 2:22-23 place the emphasis of Christ's headship on the church, making it appear that Christ was simply made head over all the church, or that He was made head for the good of the church, meaning His Headship is entirely centered on the church. No doubt, Christ is the head of the ecclesia, but don't think of this as the endpoint. Otherwise, you will miss the mark of the universality of Christ's Headship and actually diminish the on-high, celestial calling of His body. The ecclesia has been raised up and seated with the Head of the universe, which places the ecclesia over all the universe in and with Christ; and in this capacity of head and body, Christ will head up all things in heaven and on earth.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7 ESV)

Do not miss the glory of the secret revealed to Paul that had been hidden from the generations and the ages [eons]. God has chosen a called-out people from all the nations to be given to the one who is the head over the universe. They have been joined with the one who is now seated at the right hand of God the Father among the celestials or heavenly places. As far as we can discern, no one in all of God's creation has been given such a high and glorious privilege as that given to the ecclesia, which is Christ's body. And, where is Christ today?

He worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:20-21 ESV)

Christ has not come down to be the head of the ecclesia. He has raised up His body to be among the celestials, joined with Him as head over all and far above all. He is above every name that is named in this age and in the one to come, and so is His body, for where the head is, so is the body. The two are inseparable—even though, those of us alive today are physically on earth.

Now, consider this—He put all things under his feet and gave him as Head over all things to the ecclesia, which is His Body. Christ is the head and the ecclesia is His body. How does God intend to put all things under His feet? The answer is discovered in how a human body works, a body that God created.

In a human body, what lies between the head and the feet? Or, asked another way: What is closer to the feet, the head or the body? The answer to both questions is the body. Now, how does the head send a signal to the feet to move or, in this case, "to subject things under it"? It sends a signal through the body through the legs to the feet. Thus, the body is critical to get the signal to the feet. The head cannot simply yell to the feet "to subject all things"; it must go through the proper channels, so to speak.

The holy spirit inspired Paul to liken the ecclesia to a body with Christ as the head for good reason: Christ the head works through His body to subject all things under His feet. Today, the body is

subjecting things under the feet of Christ, but only in part. In the age(s) to come, this will be fully manifested, both in heaven and on earth, until all things are subjected to the head.

What is the result of the subjecting of all things under the feet? Or, what is the goal? For sure, it is not to crush or to destroy people. Isaiah, Paul, and Jesus give us a hint to the answer: And having shod the feet with the preparation of the "gospel of peace" (Isaiah 52:7; Ephesians 6:15). *Blessed are the peacemakers! For they shall be called sons of God* (Matthew 5:9).

According to Paul, the feet, which are part of the body, are to be shod with the good news of peace. In the human body, the feet are vital for the movement of the body. However, in reference to the subjecting of all things under the feet, the feet of the body serve another purpose, and that is to bring peace to the ones being brought into subjection. PEACE!

During our present age, there has been some success in bringing peace to the world, but the good news is that it will kick into high gear in the oncoming ages when the immortal sons of God are manifested to the world. They will truly bring the good news of the kingdom of God to the nations, the good news of the peace and righteousness of God in His Son. This is an amazing truth.

The peacemakers of the oncoming ages will be the sons of God charged with putting all things under the feet of Christ, which means bringing peace to and making peace with all things *in heaven and on earth*. They will be the ambassadors of God's peace treaty with the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) and the universe, that is, all of God's creation.

Dear brethren, does this excite your heart? Does it cause you to want to be a peacemaker in this life in preparation for what is to come? Let us be peacemakers, not warmongers. Let us no longer mischaracterize our heavenly Father as a mean-spirited god who is out "to get even" with mankind. He has reconciled all! He has made peace!

*God is love; God loves the world; love conquers all; nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; love never fails.* This is the truth!

### **Addendum**

When a topic such as this is presented to others, especially to ones who hold to the so-called *traditional teachings* of the church-at-large of our day, there is often some pushback if not animosity over the notion that God's judgments are not eternal but eonian. My article on *Eternity or Ages? Eternal or Eonian?* makes the case for using the word and its meaning throughout scripture. This present article has made the case for eonian chastisement; thus, the two articles together should give one a decent understanding of this topic, at least as far as I see it and have presented it.

It is also not unusual for some to challenge these things in such a way that they imply this is all made up or some modern-day invention. When confronted with the notion that none of this is new and that it can be traced back to the second century, they often show some surprise but not enough to pursue it in order to enlarge or challenge their understanding. It seems that most

would prefer to hold to the traditions of men as if that is the safest thing to do. Personally, I believe that fear and superstition are some place in the mix on why the response to such a great topic as this is often ignored and not pursued.

So, the question arises as to what some so-called *church fathers* thought about judgment and its duration. It would have been considerate of the apostles of the first century to have left us a written treatise on the subject, but they didn't so we must rely on the earliest written record as given to us by others, some of whom had been close to the time of the apostles.

With this in mind, let us consider the words of some so-called *church forefathers*.

Irenaeus of Lyons, Gaul (120-202 AD)

Irenaeus was a church leader from Lyons who was persecuted and died at the hands of the Roman Emperor Severus. Thousands of fellow Christians died during this time, as well. He wrote five books and often cited *eonian* judgment.

"For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For in the times of the kingdom, the righteous man who is upon the earth shall then forget to die. But when He saith, All things shall be subdued unto Him, it is manifest that He is excepted who did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

"John, therefore, did distinctly foresee the first 'resurrection of the just,' and the inheritance in the kingdom of the earth; and what the prophets have prophesied concerning it harmonize [with his vision]. For the Lord also taught these things, when He promised that He would have the mixed cup new with His disciples in the kingdom. The apostle, too, has confessed that the creation shall be free from the bondage of corruption, [so as to pass] into the liberty of the sons of God. And in all these things, and by them all, the same God the Father is manifested, who fashioned man, and gave promise of the inheritance of the earth to the fathers, who brought it (the creature) forth [from bondage] at the resurrection of the just, and fulfills the promises for the kingdom of His Son...."

"Christ, who was called the Son of God before the ages, was manifested in the fullness of time, in order that He might cleanse us through His blood, who were under the power of sin, presenting us as pure sons to His Father, if we yield ourselves obediently to the chastisement of the Spirit. And in the end of time He shall come to do away with all evil, and to reconcile all things, in order that there may be an end of all impurities."

Clement of Alexandria (150-213 AD)

Clement was a Greek born in Athens. From 190-203 AD, he was a leader of the church in Alexandria, Egypt. He too lived during the persecution of the Roman Emperor, Severus, but he fled the persecution and taught in Antioch and Palestine.

"God does not wreak vengeance, for vengeance is to return evil for evil, and God punishes only with an eye to the good."

"Wherefore also all men are His; some through knowledge, and others not yet so ... For He is the Savior; not the Saviour of some, and of others not ... Nor can He who is the Lord of All (and serves above all the will of the Good and Almighty Father) ever be hindered by another ... And how is He Saviour and Lord, if not the Saviour and Lord of all? But He is the Saviour of those who have believed ... and the Lord of those who have not believed, till, being enabled to confess Him, they obtain the peculiar and appropriate book which comes by Him. [Christ is] the First Administrator of the Universe, Who by the will of the Father directs the salvation of all ... (the One only Almighty Good God—from the eon and for the eon saving by His Son) ... for all things are arranged with a view to the salvation of the Universe by the Lord of the Universe, both generally and particularly ...."

"But necessary corrections, through the goodness of the great Overseeing Judge, both by the attendant angels, and through various preliminary judgments, or through the Great and Final Judgment, compel egregious sinners to repent."

"We say that the fire purifies not the flesh but sinful souls, not an all-devouring vulgar fire, but the 'wise fire' as we call it, the fire that 'pierceth the soul' which passes through it."

"Fire is conceived of as a beneficent and strong power, destroying what is base, preserving what is good; therefore, this fire is called 'wise' by the Prophets."

"Punishment is, in its operation, like medicine; it dissolves the hard heart, purges away the filth of uncleanness, and reduces the swellings of pride and haughtiness; thus, restoring its subject to a sound and healthful state."

"At any rate, even suffering is found to be useful alike in medicine and in education, and in punishment; and by means of it; characters are improved for the benefit of mankind."

"And in Him is no darkness at all," that is, no passion, no keeping up of evil respecting anyone; He destroys no one, but gives salvation to all."

"'And not only for our sins,' that is, for those of the faithful, is the Lord the Propitiator does he say, 'but also for the whole world.' He, indeed, saves all; but some He saves converting them by punishments; others, however, who follow voluntarily He saves with dignity of honour; so that 'every knee should bow to Him, of things in heaven, or things on earth, and things under the earth'—that is, angels and men."

#### Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)

Origen was a student of Clement. When Clement was forced to flee Alexandria, Origen became the head of the school in Alexandria. Without doubt, Origen is the most well-known of the early teachers of the restoration of all things, which has led some to call it "Origenism," as if it were devised by this one man.

However, such thinking reveals the prejudice or ignorance of those who insist on eternal punishment in hell.

In the introduction to the writings of Gregory Thaumaturgus as recorded in Volume 6 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, we are told:

"Alexandria continues to be the head of Christian learning ... We have already observed the continuity of the great Alexandrian school; how it arose, and how Pantaenus begat Clement, and Clement begat Origen. So Origen begat Gregory, and so the Lord has provided for the spiritual generation of the Church's teachers, age after age, from the beginning. Truly, the Lord gave to Origen a holy seed, better than natural sons and daughters."

According to Origen...

"The Sacred Scripture does, indeed, call our God 'a consuming fire' [Heb. 12:29], and says that 'rivers of fire go before His face' [Dan. 7:10], and that 'He shall come as a refiner's fire and purify the people' [Mal. 3:2-3]. As therefore, God is a consuming fire; what is it that is to be consumed by Him? We say it is wickedness, and whatever proceeds from it, such as is figuratively called 'wood, hay, and stubble' [1 Cor. 3:15]—which denote the evil works of man. Our God is a consuming fire in this sense; and He shall come as a refiner's fire to purify rational nature from the alloy of wickedness and other impure matter which has adulterated the intellectual gold and silver; consuming whatever evil is admixed in all the soul."

"But how long this purification which is wrought out by penal fire shall endure, or for how many eons it shall torment sinners, He only knows to Whom all judgment is committed by the Father."

"And so, it happens that some in the first, others in the second, and others even in the last times, through their endurance of greater and more severe punishments of long duration, extending, if I may say so, over many eons, are by these very stern methods of correction renewed and restored ...."

Novation of Rome (~250 AD)

"... wrath and indignation of the Lord, so-called, are not such passions as bear those names in man; but that they are operations of the Divine Mind directly solely to our purification."

Didymus the Blind (308-395 AD)

"For although the Judge at times inflicts tortures and anguish on those who merit them, yet he who more deeply scans the reason of things, perceiving the purpose of His goodness, who desires to amend the sinner, confesses Him to be good. He who is our Lord and Saviour inflicts on us everything that may lead us to Salvation; inflicting on us according to His mercy, yet doing this in His judgment."

"As mankind by being reclaimed from their sins are to be subjected to Christ in the dispensation appointed for the Salvation of all, so the angels will be reduced to obedience by the correction of their vices."

Gregory of Nazianzen, Bishop of Constantinople (325-390 AD)

"These (apostates), if they will, may go our way, which indeed is Christ's; but if not, let them go their own way. In another place perhaps they shall be baptized with fire, that last baptism, which is not only very painful, but enduring also; which eats up, as it were hay, all defiled matter, and consumes all vanity and vice." [Re: lake of fire]

Gregory, Bishop of Nyassa (335-395 AD)

"33. So I begin by asking what is the truth that the divine apostle intends to convey in this passage? It is this. In due course evil will pass over into non-existence; it will disappear utterly from the realm of existence. Divine and uncompounded goodness will encompass within itself every rational nature; no single being created by God will fail to achieve the kingdom of God. The evil that is now present in everything will be consumed like a base metal melted by the purifying flame. Then everything which derives from God will be as it was in the beginning before it had ever received an admixture of evil...."

"40. And this is the ultimate goal of our hope, that nothing should be left in opposition to the good, but that the divine life should permeate everything and abolish death from every being, the sin, from which as we have already said, death secured its hold over men, having already been destroyed ... *God will be all in all.*"

"44. That last phrase, which speaks of God coming to be in all by becoming all to each, clearly portrays the non-existence of evil. Obviously, God will be 'in all' only when no trace of evil is to be found in anything. For God cannot be in what is evil. So either He will not be 'in all' and some evil will be left in things, or, if we are to believe that He is 'in all,' then that belief declares that there will be no evil. For God cannot be in what is evil."

"The Lord will, in His just judgment, destroy the wickedness of sinners; not their nature ... Wickedness being thus destroyed, and its imprint being left in none, we shall all be fashioned after Christ, and in all that one character shall shine, which was originally imprinted on our nature."

"They who live in the flesh ought, by virtuous conversation, to free themselves from fleshly lusts, lest after death, they should again need another death, to cleanse away the remains of fleshly vice that cling to them."

Victorinus (~360 AD)

"... regenerate all things, as He created all things. By the life that is in Him all things will be cleansed and return into eonian life. Christ is to subject all things to Himself ... when this

shall have been accomplished, God will be in all things, because all things will be full of God."

Jerome, Bishop of Bethlehem (340-419 AD)

"In the end of all things the whole body which has been dissipated will be restored ... What I mean is, the fallen Angel will begin to be that which he was created, and man, who was expelled from Paradise, will once more be restored to the tilling of Paradise. These things will then take place universally."

John Chrysostom (347-407 AD)

"... if punishment were an evil to the sinner, God would not have added evils to the evil ... all punishment is owing to His loving us, by pains to recover us and lead us to Him, and to deliver us from sin which is worse than hell."

Titus, Bishop of Bostra (~364 AD)

"... the punishments of God are Holy, as they are remedial and salutary in their effect upon transgressors; for they are inflicted, not to preserve them in their wickedness, but to make them cease from their sins. The abyss ... is indeed the place of punishment, but it is not endless. The anguish of their sufferings compels them to break off from their sins."

Ambrose of Milan (340-397 AD)

"Our Saviour has appointed two kinds of resurrection, in accordance with which John says, in the Apocalypse, 'Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection;' for such come to grace without the judgment. As for those who do not come to the first, but are reserved until the second (resurrection), these shall be burning until they fulfill their appointed times, between the first and second resurrection; or, if they should not have fulfilled in them then, they shall remain still longer in punishment." [Comment: the "burning" of sinners between the first and second resurrection is not found in Revelation].

Given these few citations from early church fathers, it is clear that what I have presented is not new. If anything, it is simply a truth that has been lost and is in need of recovery. Obviously, there were others that held the opposing position of eternal punishment.

For example, Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430 AD) and one of the most influential forefathers of the Latin church, did not believe in the salvation of all men and a limited (eonian) chastisement. He believed in eternal judgment. However, even he was compelled to admit that his views were not embraced by all; in fact, he was in the minority.

"... very many, who, though not denying the Holy Scriptures, do not believe in endless torments."

At any rate, there are many others who have believed in eonian chastisement and the salvation of all mankind, within and without the organized, visible church. This is nothing new. A more contemporary example might surprise you.

#### Abraham Lincoln—An American Forefather

Among the forefathers of America, one individual stands out as one of our greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865 AD). It might surprise many that President Lincoln, a deeply devout Christian, believed in the salvation of all mankind. It is said of him that he knew scripture better than many of the prominent clergy of his day, and dare we say, better than any of our most recent modern-day presidents.

Consider the following report of Lincoln's life, as presented in the book by William J. Wolf titled *The Almost Chosen People* (Doubleday & Company Inc, 1959):

*"One of Lincoln's associates, Mentor Graham, tells of Lincoln: 'He took the passage, 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,' and followed up with the proposition that whatever the breach or injury of Adam's transgressions to the human race was, which no doubt was very great, was made just and right by the atonement of Christ.'" (page 47)*

*"... Lincoln wrote an essay about 1833 on predestinated universal salvation in criticism of the orthodox doctrine of endless punishment. It is also consistent with the evidence that in 1850, Lincoln, through the reading of his pastor's *The Christian's Defense* and his own wrestling with the problem, became convinced intellectually of the validity of the biblical revelation. Lincoln's conviction that God would restore the whole of creation as the outcome of Christ's atonement would have been in itself a bar to membership in the Springfield church he attended." (pages 103-104)*

*"Another associate, Isaac Cogdal, tells of a discussion on religion in Lincoln's office in 1859: 'Lincoln expressed himself in about these words: He did not nor could not believe in the endless punishment of any one of the human race. He understood punishment for sin to be a Bible doctrine; that the punishment was parental in its object, aim, and design, and intended for the good of the offender; hence it must cease when justice is satisfied. He added that all that was lost by the transgression of Adam was made good by the atonement: all that was lost by the fall was made good by the sacrifice.'" (page 104)*

*"The second statement was one dictated by Jonathan Harnett of Pleasant Plains, describing a theological discussion in 1858 in Lincoln's office. 'Lincoln covered more ground in a few words than he could in a week, and closed with the restitution of all things to God, as the doctrine taught in the scriptures, and if anyone was left in doubt in regard to his belief in the atonement of Christ and the final salvation of all men, he removed those doubts in a few questions he answered and propounded to others. After expressing himself, some one or two took exceptions to his position, and he asked a few questions that cornered his interrogators and left no room to doubt or question his soundness on the atonement of Christ, and salvation finally of all men. He did not pretend to know just when that event would be consummated, but that it would be the ultimate result, that Christ must reign*

*supreme, high over all. The Saviour of all; and the supreme Ruler, he could not be with one out of the fold; all must come in, with his understanding of the doctrine taught in the scriptures."* (pages 105-106)

President Abraham Lincoln was surely a devout and righteous follower of Christ. Given the state of our nation and all the nations of the world in this day, it seems fitting to close this chapter with the words of this great, yet imperfect and flawed, president.

*"I believe in God, the Almighty Ruler of Nations, our great and good and merciful Maker, our Father in heaven, who notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads. I believe in His eternal truth and justice. I recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blest whose God is the Lord. I believe that it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, and to invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon. I believe that it is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father equally in our triumphs and in those sorrows which we may justly fear are a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins to the needful end of our reformation. I believe that the Bible is the best gift which God has ever given to men. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book. I believe the will of God prevails. Without Him all human reliance is vain. Without the assistance of His divine Being, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, I desire that all my works and acts may be according to His will; and that it may be so, I give thanks to the Almighty, and seek His aid. I have a solemn oath registered in heaven to finish the work I am in, in full view of my responsibility to my God, with malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives me to see the right. Commending those who love me to His care, as I hope in their prayers, they will commend me, I look through the help of God to a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before."*