

LIVING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Class 7: The Justice of God in Redemptive History

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I. JUSTICE AND CRUCIFORM-APOCALYPTICISM

A. Gehenna: The Fulfillment of Divine Justice

The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail...³³ *Topheth* [cf. 2 Ki. 23:10; Jer. 7:31f; 19:6-14] has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. *Its fire pit has been made deep and wide*, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, *like a stream of burning sulfur*, sets it ablaze. (NIV Isaiah 30:30-33)¹

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body *be thrown into hell* [Gk. *gehenna*].³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body *go into hell* [Gk. *gehenna*]. (ESV Matthew 5:29-30)

If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and *be thrown into eternal fire*.⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and *be thrown into the fire of hell* [Gk. *gehenna*]. (NIV Matthew 18:8-9)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much *a child of hell* [Gk. *gehenna*] as yourselves...³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being *sentenced to hell* [Gk. *gehenna*]? (ESV Matthew 23:15, 33)

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands *to go into hell* [Gk. *gehenna*], *where the fire never goes out*...⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and *be thrown into hell* [Gk. *gehenna*],⁴⁸ where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." [Is. 66:24] (NIV Mark 9:43-48)

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.² Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.³ Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear

¹ "Southwest of the city was the Valley of Hinnom, an area that had a long history of desecration. The steep gorge was once used to burn children in sacrifice to the Ammonite god Molech (2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 7:31; 32:35). Jeremiah denounced such practices by saying that Hinnom Valley would become the valley of God's judgment, a place of slaughter (Jer. 7:32; 19:5-7). As the years passed, a sense of foreboding hung over the valley. People began to burn their garbage and offal there, using sulfur, the flammable substance we now use in matches and gunpowder. Eventually, the Hebrew name *ge-hinnom* (canyon of Hinnom) evolved into *geenna* (*gehenna*), the familiar Greek word for hell (Matt. 5:22, 29; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; Mark 9:43, 45; Luke 12:5). Thus when the Jews talked about punishment in the next life, what better image could they use than the smoldering valley they called *gehenna*? ... Some Jews, of course, took the fiery images literally, supposing that Hinnom Valley itself would become the place of hellfire and judgment (1 Enoch 27:1-2; 54:1-6; 56:3-4; 90:26-28; 4 Ezra 7:36)." (William V. Crockett, "The Metaphorical View," in *Four Views on Hell* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 58)

him who, after he has killed, has authority *to cast into hell* [Gk. *gehenna*]. Yes, I tell you, fear him! (ESV Luke 12:1-5)

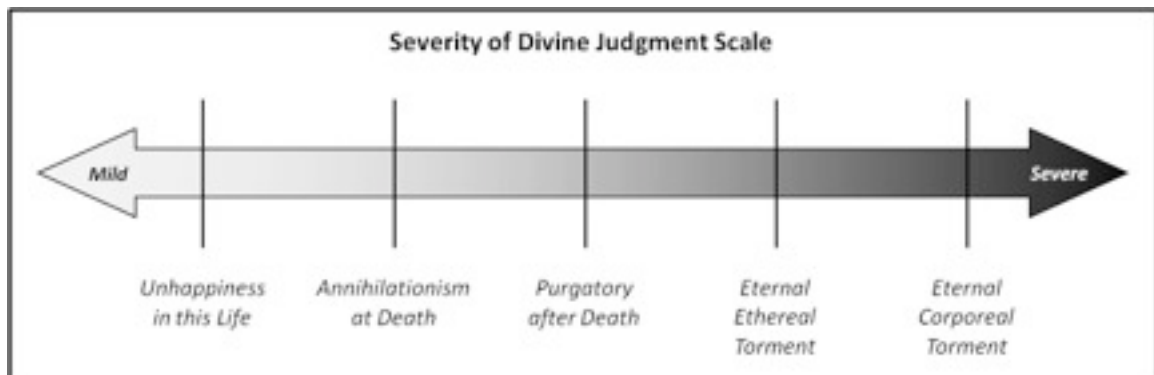
If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, *poured full strength* into the cup of his anger, and he will be *tormented with fire* and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And *the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever*, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name. (ESV Revelation 14:9-11)

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into *the lake of burning sulfur*, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be *tormented day and night for ever and ever...* ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into *the lake of fire*. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into *the lake of fire*. (NIV Revelation 20:10-15)

B. The Day of Justice

I tell you, on *the day of judgment* people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (ESV Matthew 12:36-37)

And he has given him authority *to execute judgment*, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to *the resurrection of life*, and those who have done evil to *the resurrection of judgment*. (ESV John 5:25-29)

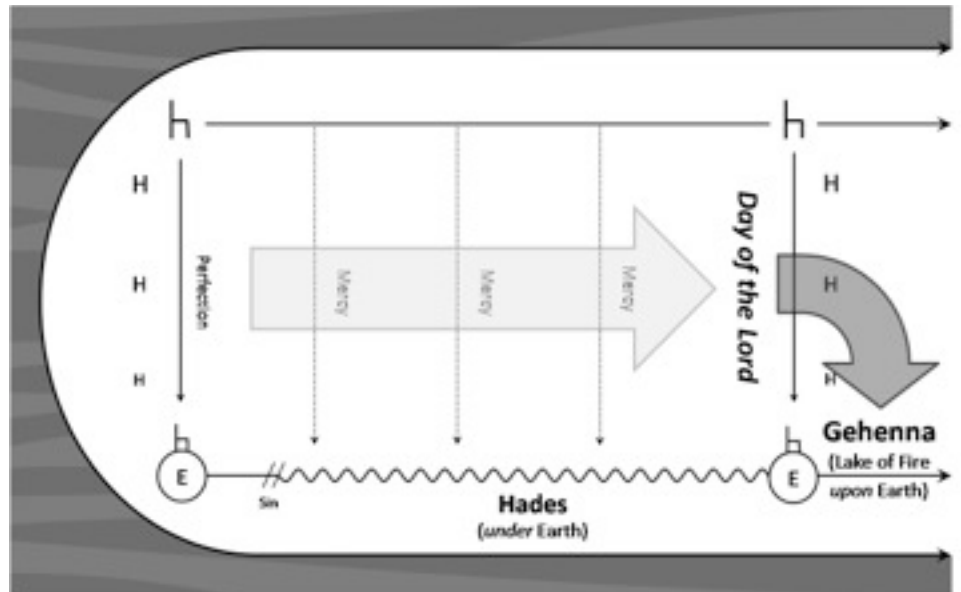


But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on *the day of wrath* when God's *righteous judgment* will be revealed. (ESV Romans 2:5)

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until *the day of judgment* and destruction of the ungodly. (ESV 2 Peter 3:7)

C. The Holding for Eschatological Justice

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but *cast them into hell* (Gk. *tartarus*) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept *until the judgment...*⁶ if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them *an example* of what is going to happen to the ungodly...⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment *until the day of judgment.* (ESV 2 Peter 2:4-9)²



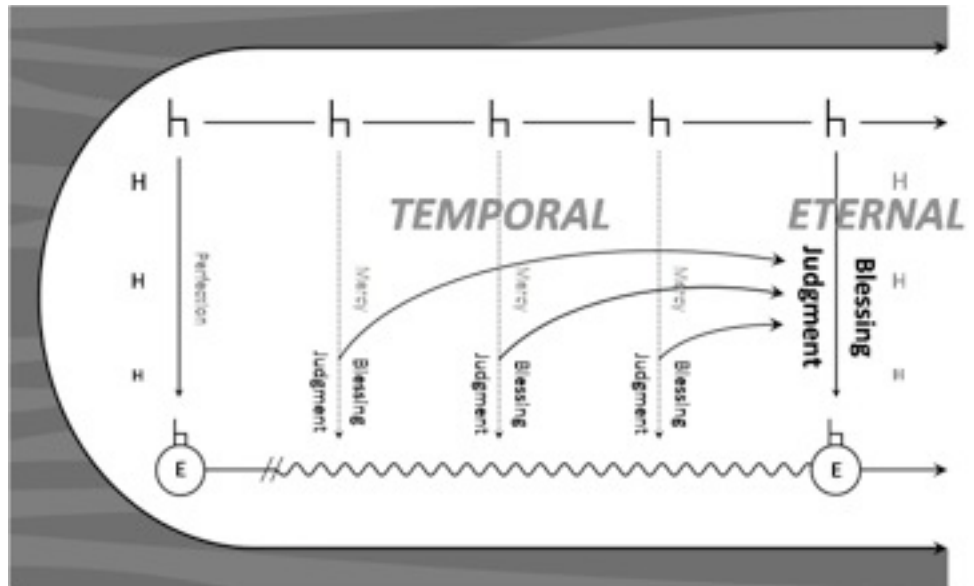
And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness *until the judgment of the great day*-⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as *an example* by undergoing a *punishment of eternal fire.* (ESV Jude 1:6-7)

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,² for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries... *Hallelujah!* The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever... *Hallelujah!* For our Lord God Almighty reigns.⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! (NIV Revelation 19:1-7)

D. Temporal and Eternal Justice

² "Fundamental for an understanding of the γέννα passages in the NT, which occur only in the Synoptists and John, is the sharp distinction made by the NT between → ἄδης and γέννα. This distinction is a. that Hades receives the ungodly only for the intervening period between death and resurrection, whereas Gehenna is their place of punishment in the last judgment; the judgment of the former is thus provisional but the torment of the latter eternal (Mk. 9:43 and par.; 9:48). It is then b. that the souls of the ungodly are outside the body in Hades, whereas in Gehenna both body and soul, reunited at the resurrection, are destroyed by eternal fire (Mk. 9:43 and par., 45, 47 and par., 48; Mt. 10:28 and par.)." (J. Jeremias, "γέννα," TDNT, 1:658)

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will *throw her onto a sickbed*, and those who commit



adultery with her I will *throw into great tribulation*, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will *strike her children dead*. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and *I will give to each of you as your works deserve*. (ESV Revelation 2:20-23)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, *you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*. ²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be *guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord*. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body *eats and drinks judgment on himself*. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, *we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world*. (ESV 1 Corinthians 11:26-32)

E. This Age and the Mercy of God

About this time Jesus was informed that *Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee* as they were sacrificing at the Temple in Jerusalem. ² "Do you think those Galileans were *worse sinners* than other people from Galilee?" he asked. "Is that why they suffered?" ³ Not at all! *And you will also perish unless you turn from your evil ways and turn to God*. ⁴ And what about the eighteen men who died when the Tower of Siloam fell on them? Were they the *worst sinners* in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, and I tell you again that *unless you repent, you will also perish*." (NLT Luke 13:1-5)

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere *to repent*. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will *judge the world with justice* by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. (NIV Acts 17:30-31)

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly... ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, *but is patient toward you*, not wishing that any should perish, *but that all should reach repentance*. (ESV 2 Peter 3:7-9)

II. GOD'S DESIRE FOR JUSTICE

A. The Prophetic Testimony

The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence *his soul hates*.⁶ On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot.⁷ For the LORD is righteous, *he loves justice*; upright men will see his face. (NIV Psalm 11:5-7)

Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches,²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who *practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness* in the earth. *For in these things I delight*, declares the LORD. (ESV Jeremiah 9:23-24)

But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and *with justice and might*, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.⁹ Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, *who detest justice* and make crooked all that is straight,¹⁰ who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity.¹¹ Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." (ESV Micah 3:8-11)

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render *true judgments*, show kindness and mercy to one another,¹⁰ do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart."¹¹ But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.¹² They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. (ESV Zechariah 7:9-12)

B. The Call to Imitate the Justice of God

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and *to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives* in the present age,¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are *zealous for good works*. (ESV Titus 2:11-14)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,¹⁵ but *as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*,¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, *conduct yourselves with fear* throughout the time of your exile. (ESV 1 Peter 1:13-17)

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,⁵ you are to *deliver this man to Satan* for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord...¹¹ I am writing to you not to

associate with anyone *who bears the name of brother* if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² *For what have I to do with judging outsiders?* Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³ *God judges those outside.* "Purge the evil person from among you." ^{6:1} When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law *before the unrighteous* instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, *are you incompetent to try trivial cases?* ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? *How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!* ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that *before unbelievers?* ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers! (ESV 1 Corinthians 5:4-6:8)

C. The Call to Imitate the Mercy of God

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, *but now you have received mercy.* ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. ¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution... ¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle *but also to the unjust.* ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, *mindful of God,* one endures sorrows *while suffering unjustly.* ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ *For to this you have been called,* because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, *so that you might follow in his steps.* ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but *continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* (ESV 1 Peter 2:10-23)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you *share Christ's sufferings,* that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, *you are blessed,* because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone *suffers as a Christian,* let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God;* and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹ Therefore let those who *suffer according to God's will* entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (ESV 1 Peter 4:12-19)