

# A Study on Judgement

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The following is companion study to my novella, *Allegory*  
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**First:** if you want a simpler explanation of what the Kingdom of God is all about,  
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'Hell' is a dirty word. Some of us say it to our mates in the pub, and some of us, to our parishioners from the pulpit -- but either way it's dirty.

Maybe that's because there's too much about it we're afraid to ask, or let on we don't know about it. It might be because we look at it through a pair of lenses that we're afraid to shed in the presence of our fellow churchmen -- i.e. the ready made systematic theology that we've been told is the result of thorough study of all of what the Bible has to say about the subject, all the way down through church history by people better than you and I -- so we blindly accept that that's what the Bible has to say about the subject.

Just for the fun of it, let's pretend that that systematic theology hasn't been written yet. In fact, let's pretend that all we have are what the early believers had, even before Acts and Paul's epistles were written. All we have are the sayings of Yeshua.

That is what the church started with, after all. Acts is really just a record of how the churches were launched using that formula. Even Paul's epistles were written to churches that were built on the foundation of Yeshua's sayings, so whatever Paul said about Hell -- and anything else, for that matter -- would have been understood against a background of what Yeshua already said about it.

So, we'll start with Yeshua's sayings, and then, look briefly at how the preachers in Acts of the Apostles treated it. After that we'll look at what Paul's epistles and Revelation says. We'll take it in the order that our spiritual forefathers received it, and then re-ask some of the same questions: "Who, exactly, is a candidate for hell?"; "What about some of the indigestible sayings of Yeshua in the Gospels?" (without the filter of systematic theology, of course); "Are there only two destinations in the world to come, or is there room for belief in Purgatory as well?"; and not least (and probably not last either), "What about those who haven't heard?"

We might not answer all of these questions conclusively, but I think we may find that they do point to some facts of the Kingdom of God that we have generally tended to ignore, so this should be rewarding. If not -- if it ends up being too indigestible -- at least, we still have Augustine, Calvin, and Schofield to fall back on, okay?

**Sermon on the Mt.** -- Matthew 5:18-30 is a passage in the Sermon on the Mt. in which Yeshua speaks extensively of judgement and rewards. His references to the negative rewards range from being least in the kingdom of God, punishment with hope of getting out, to *Gei-Hinnom*, which suggests eternal punishment in hell. It's a handy passage because it's a summary of everything we'll cover in this discussion.

In Matthew 5:18-20, one has a choice being greatest or least in the kingdom of heaven, depending on if one keeps and teaches the commandments; and not entering the kingdom of heaven at all if one's righteousness doesn't exceed that of the Pharisees. Is the latter synonymous with hell?

Matthew 5:21-22 is the first mention of *Gei-Hinnom*. It's the penalty for calling one's brother a fool. *Gei-Hinnom* was a term that the Rabbis used loosely to mean the place for dead souls rejected from God's kingdom. It was actually an area outside the city wall where rubbish was dumped, and there was usually a fire burning.

Was it Yeshua's intention to use this term to refer to the place of eternal punishment? Was it his purpose here to outline a doctrine of hell, or was he simply using relative terms? We'll talk

more about *Gei-Hinnom* later.

Then, in Matthew 5:23-26, in the case of the one on ones way to the court of law, we suddenly see punishment with the hope of coming out. The last phrase says *you will certainly not get out until you have paid the last penny*. We'll look at more of this in a moment.

So far in this passage, we've found the three categories of judgement sayings of Yeshua that will be the subject of our discussion: 1. *Gei-Hinnom*; 2. Prison; and 3. Exclusion from the kingdom. We'll look at the first two headings right off, and work our way to the third.

***Gei-Hinnom*** -- The final section of the passage we've referred to, Matthew 5:27-30, brings us back to the concept of *Gei-Hinnom*. The key phrase is, *Better that you should lose one part of you than have your whole body thrown into Gei-Hinnom*.

The context for this over-all passage is in how to apply the Torah so as to be a candidate for the Kingdom of God. Here, there's the added impetus -- avoid being sent to *Gei-Hinnom*. Yeshua obviously doesn't recommend the literal cutting off one's body parts as that would in itself be a violation of the Torah. He's using a Jewish style superlative to say, 'Do what it takes. This is serious.'

This section was in reference to lust, which can lead to adultery. The previous section in which *Ge-Hinnom* was mentioned, verses 21-22, was regarding hatred, which is the potential for murder.

In Jewish tradition, the three capital offences are adultery, murder and idolatry. The mandatory penalty for these under the national covenant of Israel, was stoning.

Yeshua has equated the seeds with the final product. What Yeshua is saying is, deal with these sins even when they're in their infancy, as thoughts in the heart, hatred, lust; and I suppose we could add, whatever potentially leads to idol worship (that would be material for a different discussion).

In a parallel passage, Matthew 18:6-9, we find that Yeshua more clearly means "hell". He refers to the choices as obtaining eternal life, versus, being thrown into the fire of *Gei-Hinnom*.

Here, he also compares it to cutting off one's offending body part so as to avoid eternal punishment. The context here is in the seriousness of being a stumbling block, or causing offence. The most vivid picture is that of offending a little one, destroying a child's life, or even that of a vulnerable adult. It's something that must be avoided at all costs, even if it means getting rid of something you value as much as your eye or your hand. The mention of 'everlasting fire' indicates that Yeshua is, indeed, referring to hell.

Taken together, we see that the sin of destroying someone else's life, whether by murder, by adultery (*sic.* destroying another person's marriage), by abuse, or even entertaining the option of doing so, is something we must be on our guard for. More on this later.

***Prison*** -- Later in the same chapter, we again find mention of the judgement that lasts only until the transgressor has paid 'the last penny':

In Matthew 18:21-35, Yeshua tells Peter the story of the servant who was forgiven by the master, but wouldn't forgive his fellow servant. He was turned over to the jailer *for punishment until he paid back everything he owed*.

This fits in the same pattern as the saying in Matthew chapter 5, where one is advised to settle with the opponent on the way to court, or pay the 'last penny'. The judgement is similar, and so is the offence. In both cases, maintaining a good relationship with others is seen as a priority. Though the judgement isn't as severe as that of causing another to stumble, both can be seen as two aspects, or two degrees of the same problem -- failure to take care where other people, their spiritual, physical, social and psychological welfare is concerned.

We'll try to fit this into an understandable framework later on.

***failure to show mercy*** -- In two more of Yeshua's parables, he obviously refers to hell in the same sense *Gei-Hinnom*, the place of fiery torment. In both of these, we see that ones deeds have a determining factor in one being assigned to heaven or hell -- especially showing, or failing to show mercy.

Matthew 25:31-46 is where the Son of Man judges the sheep from the goats. To the goats, He says, *Go off into the fire prepared for the Adversary and his angels!* Their offence: failing to show mercy when it was in their power to do so.

On the other hand, the sheep nations appear bewildered that they were allowed into the kingdom.

Luke 16:19-31 is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The only distinction made between the two was that the rich man lived only for himself while Lazarus suffered all his life. Again, the rich man's offence was failure to show mercy.

It's interesting to note that there is no mention of Lazarus being a God fearing man, only that he got the wrong end of the stick. There is, however, the indication that heeding Moses and the prophets could have saved the rich man.

The point in both parables is that the rich man and the goat nations failed to show mercy and kindness when it's in their power to do so. According to Yeshua, elsewhere, that is the whole point of the Torah and the Prophets. The sheep nations did it, probably following their inner witness as described in Romans 2 (we'll get to that later), and Lazarus was the one in need of mercy, and received it at Abraham's bosom.

**wailing and grinding of teeth**-- One phrase that recurs in Yeshua's sayings regarding judgement that of 'wailing and the grinding of teeth'. This phrase is used in a number of contexts. Are they all synonymous with just one place -- namely hell?

In the following two occurrences, both from Matthew 13, they seem to indicate a final and fiery destruction.

Matthew 13:39-43 gives us Yeshua's explanation of his parable of the wheat and the tares. The tares are finally gathered and thrown into a furnace, *where people will wail and grind their teeth.*

Among those said to be the tares are 'all things that *cause people to sin.*' This sounds close to causing others to stumble, which we discussed earlier, which saw was a damnable sin. A key concept in this passage, as also a few verses later in Matthew 13:47-50, is that of a fiery furnace.

Matthew 13:47-50 makes the distinction between the 'evil' and the 'righteous'. Both are strong terms. Is there any middle ground?

Both of these parables are about the end of the age, at which time, according to other passages, there seems to be a polarisation between good and evil to the extent that everyone will have been drawn to either one or the other.

In the two parables, both found in the same passages, we see 'wailing and grinding of teeth' accompanying destruction in the fiery furnace. Some rules of hermeneutics state that a term that has been used to clearly mean one thing in one passage, should always be taken to mean the same thing. Therefore, some say, 'wailing and grinding of teeth' is always indicative of being in hell, the final state of the wicked. I would rather wait and look at some of the other passages before making a judgement. The more indicative key words in both parables are, 'end of the age', and 'fiery furnace'.

Let's look at some passages that associate the 'wailing and the grinding' of teeth in relation with another term: 'outer darkness'.

Matthew 22:1-14 is the parable of the wedding feast. Here, there are two distinct groups, both to be excluded from the kingdom, but not in the same category.

First, we see that those who mistreated and killed the messengers were judged, killed and their cities destroyed. Then we see that the one who showed up inappropriately dressed for the wedding was tied up and thrown into outer darkness where he wailed and ground his teeth.

From this passage, does it look like the two forms of judgement are, in fact, the same thing? The murderers and persecutors, no doubt, ended up in the fiery furnace referred to in Matthew 13. In that context, they would have no doubt wailed and ground their teeth, as the inappropriately dressed wedding guest did in this context. However, the passage doesn't make it obvious that the two ended up in the same place. That can only be inferred by applying a fully conclusive doctrine of eternal judgement, which we're only in the process of developing here.

Let's look at 'wailing and grinding of teeth' from a slightly different angle before we solidify our conclusions.

Luke 13:24-30 talks about struggling to get in by the narrow door. Those who don't bother, will one day 'cry and grind their teeth' when they look and see the Patriarchs and prophets, along with the gentile nations inside and them left outside, knocking at the door, trying to get in. There are dynamics here that we would be hard put to apply literally to the common 'heaven - hell' scenario, such as standing outside and knocking, or being able to see those inside. It looks like the offenders here are in the same place the five foolish virgins found themselves in, which we'll look at later.

In any case, it's looking more and more to me like 'wailing and grinding one's teeth' is not so much a reference to an exact place, be it a fiery furnace, outer darkness, or simply the wrong side of the door, but to how one reacts when one finds him/herself in that position -- an expression of intense regret.

By now, we can start to see the direction we're moving in. We might be accused of giving people licence to sin by 'watering down' the Bible doctrine of hell. Really, we're only contemplating a slight shift away from an extreme and rather draconian position. Extremeness is not synonymous with truth. In any case, wailing and grinding one's teeth is not a pleasant experience no matter where one is doing it. I, for one, don't plan to rush headlong into outer darkness, nor plant myself on the wrong side of the door just because it doesn't happen to include fire and brimstone.

That's a good point to keep in mind when looking at the next category of passages.

**judgement on Christians** -- In Matthew 7:21-27, those who appear doctrinally correct are rejected, even those who seem to be operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They ask Him at the day of judgement, *Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? etc.* The answer they receive is, *I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!* Again, it isn't clear that they are assigned to hell, but at least they're excluded from the kingdom of God.

In Matthew 24:45-25:30, we read a group of parables Yeshua related during his discourse on the end times: the parable of the Faithful Servant; the Ten Virgins; and the parable of the Talents. In these, Yeshua describes the various ones who will be excluded from the kingdom. Again, it is not obvious in each case that they will actually be thrown into hell.

To the five foolish virgins, he says, 'I don't know you.' The abusive servant and the one with the one talent are both relegated to a place where there will be weeping and the grinding of teeth.

**three categories of judgement sayings** -- When we look at all the sayings of Yeshua regarding judgement, we can place them in three general categories:

**1. Gei-Hinnom**, Sheol, the fire prepared for the Adversary and his angels -- where Yeshua obviously means 'hell', as we think of it. It's the place for those who have committed the more serious sins, have caused others to stumble, or have lived only for themselves, failing to show mercy or kindness when it was in their power to do so.

**2. Prison** -- where the unforgiving one will be held until they have paid 'the last penny'. It is the place for those who refuse to forgive, or won't prioritise relationships. The tenure seems to be conditional to however long it takes to resolve the conflict. It's possible that Yeshua was referring to a state of spiritual imprisonment while in this life, perhaps like the 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Perhaps it's a state suffered both in this life and the next. We'll cover that possibility in a moment.

**3. Excluded from the kingdom** and/or cast into outer darkness (probably synonymous) -- those who claim Yeshua as Lord, but don't do his will, even if they demonstrate power in his name; those who don't make profitable use of resources they have been given; those who tire of watching for the Master's return and abuse their fellow servants, or otherwise fail to take their mandate seriously and are found not ready when the time comes to act. Perhaps we could include in this category the passages where Yeshua states the costs of discipleship (doesn't hate father and mother, looks back after putting ones hand to the plough, etc.).

Do the latter two indicate the possibility of there being other after-life states apart from dwelling in the heavenly kingdom, or burning in hell? What about the possibility of purgatory -- even if it's a modification of the modern Catholic version?

Despite universal rejection by Protestants, early church fathers such as Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine and a host of others believed in an intermediate state after death. Martin Luther believed in purgatory at first, and only changed his mind about it some ten years into the reformation because it couldn't be proven directly from scripture. The rest of the Protestant movement followed suit. Some Protestants today believe heaven may have an outer perimeter for those unprepared to go into the direct presence of God.

Let's separate the question, 'Is there a Purgatory,' from that of indulgences, praying for the dead or even salvation by works. Our goal here isn't to be as Protestant as we possibly can, but to seek the truth.

However, we'll leave it as an open question (meaning, this is as close to an answer as you'll find here), except to say that if we take Yeshua's sayings as forming the core of our understanding, then either they indicate something like purgatory, or else something that falls far short of the doctrine of 'eternal security' that many Evangelicals hold dear.

***the Gospels or the Epistles?*** -- No matter how we look at the sayings of Yeshua regarding judgement, they don't sit well with the 'once saved always saved' doctrine, and the Calvinistic angle on the doctrine of salvation by grace, without works\*. It's easy to see why many assign all of Yeshua's sayings to a 'dispensation' other than that of the church age, saying that before making atonement, Yeshua was the last prophet of the Old Covenant. Instead, they prefer to treat Paul's epistles as the foundation of Christian faith. [\* footnote: before you start in on me, please note that I expressly mean the *Calvinistic Angle* on salvation by grace. I do believe in Ephesians 2:8,9.]

We must consider, however, that much of Yeshua's teaching was directed to those who were to be the leaders of the church soon to be birthed. When the new church came into being, those very apostles began to 'teach all nations ... beginning in Jerusalem ... commanding them to observe all that Yeshua had told them.' Paul's epistles were written to churches that were already thus established, so his purpose in writing to them wasn't to lay a foundation, but to build on the one they had already received and to take them beyond. Early church documents, such as the *Didache* seem to affirm that it was the sayings of Yeshua that were the milk and bread of new believers. Also, how could anyone claim to have prophesied and done miracles in his name, unless the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit had already happened? It's to this group that Yeshua warns in advance, "So, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on bedrock..." It almost sounds as though Yeshua foresaw the controversy, and said 'these words of mine are the foundation.'

While it may not suit Dispensational Calvinism to apply Yeshua's sayings to the church age, neither does it assume a doctrine of salvation by works.

***basis of judgement under the New Covenant*** -- Matthew 7:1-6 and James 2:8-13 show us the basis of how we will be judged. Yeshua said in his Sermon on the Mt., *Don't judge, so that you won't be judged, for the way you judge others is how you will be judged.*

James, Yeshua's brother and leader of the Jewish church, echoes this principle, saying, *Keep speaking and acting like people who will be judged by a Torah which gives freedom. For judgement will be without mercy toward one who doesn't show mercy; but mercy wins out over judgement.*

W. Carlson's MNV translation from the Hebrew Peshita translates verse 13: *by mercy, you will be raised above judgement.*

By walking according to the royal commandment, that of loving our neighbour as ourself, we are above the law, but when we judge, we're back under the same law we use to judge others. Paul says as much when he writes, in Romans 8, There is no condemnation to those ... who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. Walking in love is the same as walking in the spirit.

Paul also says in Galatians 5, 'If you walk on the spirit, you won't fulfil the deeds of the flesh.' Elsewhere, it indicates that loving ones neighbour will pre-empt the sins covered by the commandments. Paul also makes the connection between judging and being under judgement in the first few verses of Romans chapter 2.

This reveals the direct link between the forbidden fruit and the human condition -- to which some attach the doctrine of 'original sin'. We can see a progression:

**1.** The forbidden fruit enabled humanity to distinguish good and evil. It came with a acute awareness of him/herself, the first sign of which was perceiving one's own body as an oddity, and therefore, evil and something to be ashamed of. Everything became subject to a standard of good and evil.

**2.** With knowledge of good and evil, of course, came the ability to judge. Judgement, in this case, is passing something off as good or evil.

**3.** The moment we began judging, according to Yeshua's principal, we came under judgement. By judging others, we, in effect write the rulebook by which we are judged. Those who judge others by how well they keep the Torah, are, of course judged by the Torah themselves.

That, of course, is a bit over-simplified. Judgement by our fellow humans is often necessary to maintain justice and civil order. However, even that is rooted in another aspect of the knowledge of good and evil, that human nature is drawn towards evil through our knowledge of it.

But we see how it applies to the normal Christian life. Once we've been forgiven of things that marked us out for judgement, through Yeshua's atonement, we receive access to His grace that enables us to live according to the Royal Law of Liberty, the life of love.

What James called the Royal Law of Liberty, Paul called grace. They both really say the same thing, but this fact, too, tends to be obscured by some of our systematic theology.

James' teaching comes across from a different angle than Paul's, so much that some, like Martin Luther and others were tempted to drop the book of James from the canon of scripture. However, if we consider that James' teaching reflects the foundations laid down by Yeshua, and defines many of the terms used later by Paul, we'll find that James and Paul fit together very well.

James says, 'Faith without works is dead.' Paul says salvation is not of works, but of faith.

When James and Paul say 'works', they're each talking about different things. They're not contradictory, because they're using alternate meanings:

**a.** James' use: Works = action that is a natural product of what's in one's heart, indicative of life. One must still make a decision, but even that's a matter of giving in to the right desire. They are, in fact, the results God is looking for. They are the sign of life.

**b.** Paul's use: Works = an attempt to build on something that isn't there in order to gain merit and earn one's favour with God. Living rigidly by a set of rules, perhaps with some success, even when it's against ones nature to do so. The results, if any, are only outward, whereas God looks on the heart. It's a dead thing.

Salvation is by faith, yes, but what kind of faith? If Paul's epistles are the foundation of the faith, then there could be room to believe, as many do, that simply accepting the gospel message as a fact, without any outward sign that we've truly become His disciples, is enough to get us saved (actually, I believe that a close and careful reading of Paul doesn't lead to that).

But if Paul were writing to churches that had already been taught about faith, and therefore knew what that faith entails, then why would he have to repeat what had been said previously? He could say exactly what he did without the fear that they would interpret his message as a new religion of 'easy believism'.

By emphasising Pauline theology as foundational material, Dispensational Calvinism has attempted to present the Christian experience as a static state, where the emphasis is on salvation from hell, and once having achieved that, true discipleship is optional. I believe there is a static/passive aspect to our salvation, but I believe that has been over-emphasised to the detriment of our understanding of our active role in the Christian life, and walking in the Spirit.

Note: I use the term 'Dispensational Calvinism' to mean the popular theology that has been around for the last 150 years or so, which emphasises Despensationalism and the 'once-saved-always-saved' doctrine. John Calvin didn't teach 'once-saved-always-saved'. One of the Five Points of Calvinism is, Perseverance of the Saints. It's the true saints who actively persevere. One can have true faith, according to John Calvin, but by falling away, one shows that one was not predestined to

salvation to begin with. However, I must add to their credit, many Dispensational Calvinists do emphasise discipleship as a highly desirable lifestyle, and quite a few have exemplified it in their own lives.

***how did the apostles preach it?*** -- Next, let's look at how the early apostles and evangelists spoke of judgement in their proclamation of the gospel. What did they actually emphasise? Did they warn the non-believers of Hell if they die without repenting to God? Was the purpose of evangelism to populate heaven? Acts 2:40; Acts 8:18-24; Acts 13:46; Acts 17:24-31; Acts 18:6 and Acts 24:25 are examples of Peter's and Paul's presentation.

There is mention of judgement, but it's not as up front as we tend to make it. In many cases, mention of hell is made after the hearer has heard most of the message, but appears to be resistant. The message is never prefaced by, 'If you were to die tonight...' The gospel was not presented as a remedy to hell, but as an invitation to partake of God's plan on earth (his kingdom), his forgiveness, and his life. The word 'salvation' tends to mean 'salvation from sin,' not 'salvation from hell.'

On the other hand, judgement was a factor, as in the case of Paul's chat with Felix, where Paul *began to discuss righteousness, self-control and the coming Judgement*, which frightened Felix into postponing any more discussion on the issue.

We also note, in some of the moves of the Holy Spirit over the past three or so hundred years, people come under conviction and fear for their souls. This happened with Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley and a number of others. George Whitfield's famous sermon, *A Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God*, brought many sinners to their knees.

Another saying of Yeshua we should note is Matthew 10:28, Do not fear those who kill the body but are powerless to kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gei-Hinnom.

However, there is a subtle difference between this and the way we generally bring up the subject of Hell. With the Apostles, the focus was on God. It's God who can destroy both soul and body. It was the angry God that featured in Whitfield's sermon, not just a sinner bound for hell. Hell was a part of it, yes, but the fear of God was the result of the Holy Spirit's conviction.

Any articulate human, or cleverly done visuals, or advertising technology, can instil a fear of Hell, just as easily as we instil a fear of the "boogieman" in small children. Only the Holy Spirit can bring on the fear of God. I've personally had enough of clever gimmickry, and I think, so has the rest of the world.

It's those who oppose God's plan and/or refuse to be a part of it after having heard, that are seen as the prime candidates for hell, as the following passage by Paul suggests in II Thess 1:6-9.

***obeying the gospel*** -- Paul's description of it to the Thessalonians is among the only references that speaks Hell as being for those who don't obey the gospel. Other references, even in Revelation 20:10-15 and 21:8 indicate that it is for those who commit the various sins, which it specifically mentions, as well as those whose names are not in the Book of Life.

The mention of the Book of Life, as well as obedience to the Gospel (II Thess) would indicate that there is responsibility to respond to the message of Messiah with repentance and faith. Hell appears to be for those who refuse to do so after having heard, as well as those who have failed to resist being drawn into a sinful lifestyle, even if they've never heard the gospel. These two references bring us the closest to our present, New Covenant understanding of the role of eternal punishment.

However, the Calvinistic concept of Total Depravity, or born in Original Sin, doesn't seem to be mentioned as a reason for being assigned to hell, though Calvinists would probably put emphasis on the record in the Book of Life.

Five Point Calvinism teaches that because of Adam's fall, we are all tainted with sin before even committing our first wrong act, and therefore condemned to hell. Even babies, according to strict Calvinistic interpretation are doomed to hell. That's one of the reasons many Reformation Protestants practice infant baptism (Dispensational Calvinists' and others believe in an age of

accountability, which allows un-baptised infants to go to Heaven). This concept is called 'Original Sin'. Augustine of Hippo was one of the first to give an in depth explanation on this subject. His teaching is the foundation for both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed emphasis on Original Sin. However, very little reference is found to it in the earlier Church Fathers.

Something did happen to the human race when Adam sinned, but I believe that can be explained by the nature of the forbidden fruit. As we mentioned earlier, it brought a consciousness of good and evil.

As Paul says in Romans 3:23, all have sinned. In the context of all this, it is actively sinning that makes us sinners. He explains in chapter 6 that because of Adam's disobedience, we were affected in such a way that we inevitably begin to commit sin.

So, the warning of eternal judgement is appropriate for those who have heard the gospel in an unmistakable way, but have refused to respond. However, let's let the Holy Spirit be the guide, as only He knows to whom it applies, and how to instil a fear of God in the hearer. But, on the other hand, let's not be squeamish about it. Maybe we should be preaching judgement in other arenas as well -- ie. to those who have the means but refuse to show mercy; those whose politics creates a stumbling block...? I have the feeling that an accurate understanding of this could lead to a true prophetic revival.

***those who never heard*** -- So, what about those who have never heard the gospel, but would have probably responded had it been communicated to them the right way -- or members of the Jewish community during the middle ages and beyond, who kept the Torah out of love and fear of God, but who's only witness to the Messiah was an enraged priest waving a crucifix?

Acts chapter 10 gives an account of Cornelius, in which we see a striking description. The first four verses are probably best quoted in whole:

*Acts 10:1-4 -- There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a Roman army officer in what was called the Italian Regiment. He was a devout man, a "God-fearer," as was his whole household; he gave generously to help the Jewish poor and prayed regularly to God.*

*One afternoon around three o'clock he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"*

*Cornelius stared at the angel, terrified. "What is it, sir?" he asked. "Your prayers," replied the angel, "and your acts of charity have gone up into God's presence, so that he has you on his mind..."*

Here is an example of one's works qualifying one before God. Cornelius' works revealed what was in his heart.

In looking at the difference between Paul's and James' terminology, we saw that there are two ways of looking at works: 1. works as a point system by which one measures one's perfection; or 2. works as revealing what is in one's heart, as James 2 describes (works revealing ones faith).

When we speak of 'salvation by works', we usually assume number one, above. As Romans demonstrates, no one can be saved by that method. However, as we observed earlier, judging puts us in that category.

Cornelius' case would come in under number two. His acts of charity and his prayer demonstrated his fear and devotion to the Lord, as Peter describes in verses 34 and 35, *I now understand that God does not play favourites, but that whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what people he belongs to..."*

In the following passage from Romans 2, can we recognise a description of Cornelius?

*Romans 2:5-16 -- ...God's righteous judgement will be revealed; for he will pay back each one according to his deeds. To those who seek glory, honour and immortality by perseverance in doing good, he will pay back eternal life. But to those who are self-seeking, who disobey the truth and obey evil, he will pay back wrath and anger. Yes, he will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile; but glory and honour and shalom*

*to everyone who keeps doing what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. For God does not show favouritism. All who have sinned outside the framework of Torah will die outside the framework of Torah; and all who have sinned within the framework of Torah will be judged by Torah. For it is not merely the hearers of Torah whom God considers righteous; rather, it is the doers of what Torah says who will be made righteous in God's sight.*

*For whenever Gentiles, who have no Torah, do naturally what the Torah requires, then these, even though they don't have Torah, for themselves are Torah!*

*For their lives show that the conduct the Torah dictates is written in their hearts. Their consciences also bear witness to this, for their conflicting thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them on a day when God passes judgement on people's inmost secrets.*

How many are there in the world, past and present, who like Cornelius, demonstrate their love for Truth by their works, and will be judged accordingly -- even if they're living in a place and time where the likes of Peter isn't available?

We need to keep in mind, we're talking about works as in James' definition, action that indicates what's in the heart. Some theology only defines works according to Paul's definition, as a way to achieve perfection. By means of the "Roman Road", they turn it into a catch 22 situation. Romans 3:22 says, "All have sin...", therefore nobody can achieve perfection, and of course, anything less than perfection is grounds for eternal damnation. Romans 6:22 says, "The wages of sin is death...", so even if your only sin was crying out of turn as a baby, they see no one saved from eternal hell by Romans 2.

I find this logic a tad bit Draconian.

But, does the alternative approach smack of universalism? On the contrary, what Paul is saying in Romans 2 is that those who haven't heard have no excuse. If some have found reprieve from eternal damnation by being faithful to their conscience, even having never heard the gospel, they are witnesses against those who 'suppress the truth' (Romans 1:18), refusing to listen to the subtle signs divinely placed in their path. I won't venture to say what the ratio is of who ends up where. Only God knows the heart, and judges accordingly. Yeshua did say that it's a broad and easy path that leads to destruction, and relatively few find the one that leads to salvation, even if it's by seeking glory, honour and immortality by perseverance in doing good (verse 7). On the other hand, many who were on the road to Hell have been averted by being confronted by a clear witness to the Gospel.

Now, I've pre-empted the next obvious objection by stating that in every case, to evangelise is better than not to evangelise. We don't take away people's excuses by communicating the pure gospel.

But, what is the pure gospel?

***the goal of evangelism*** -- Getting them to say a quick prayer so as to insure their eternal security was not the goal of the apostles, nor should it be ours. Rather, it was to make disciples who would be committed to the lifestyle of the kingdom, and to gather those disciples into local churches that would grow together, and as a community, be a shining witness that would draw yet more people. This approach to evangelism, I'm convinced, will save more people from hell than our 'instant salvation' packets. The quick salvation method may seem to work at first, but as the church fills up with people who haven't truly embraced the kingdom lifestyle, the gospel message loses its credibility. It becomes no more than words, with no real witness.

It's easy to understand how this happened. If our theology tells us that every single person alive will end up in either heaven or hell, depending on if they 'prayed to ask Jesus into their heart,' of course, that becomes top priority. Don't waste time with kingdom communities, there are people dying out there! Our marketing people have risen to the challenge by producing instant salvation packets.

But look where it's got us. The Western church is so full of people who think they're in because they read a prayer off the back of a Chick-tract, or raised their hand when everybody's heads were

bowed and eyes closed, that it's hard to tell the difference between a believer and a non-believer. The evangelistic PR machine has run out of steam.

For one thing, our 'instant salvation' packet lacks the vital ingredients: repent, believe, and be baptised.

**what is salvation?** -- Going back to Cornelius and his household: Acts 11:18 does indicate that they needed to repent and receive salvation. Does this mean that until that point, Cornelius was doomed to eternal damnation?

It depends on what we mean by 'salvation'. In our 21st century style of evangelism, we tend to define it as salvation from hell. In the first century, they preached salvation from *sin*. It's the crossing over from being a citizen of the present world to that of the Kingdom of God. That citizenship begins on earth.

The name, "Yeshua", is derived from the word "salvation". We see in Matthew 1:21 Joseph was instructed by the angel to call his name "Yeshua", "...for he will save his people from their *sin*." This is the answer to the prayer of Psalm 118:25,26 from which we get the word "Hosanna", which means, "Save us". It's what the people shouted as Yeshua rode into Jerusalem, and it has to do with the Kingdom of God being set up.

They weren't saying, 'Take us to heaven when we die'; rather, 'Establish your kingdom to save us from our intense hardship.'

So, "Salvation" means the Kingdom of God displacing the disfigured, broken environment that came about as the result of Adam's sin. It must be understood both as an individual thing and corporate. Individually, we're saved from sin, and we're added to the community, where we apply salvation to other aspects of life.

The goal of the gospel isn't just to save people from hell, but to establish a divine presence on earth. That presence is the Kingdom of God, and the community of citizens in that kingdom is the Church. Because it's a supernatural kingdom, where God is king, the citizens must be connected spiritually. That happens through the initial salvation experience, but as Phillipians 2:12 says, we continue to work out that salvation by being cleansed of our old habits and learning to live in community.

Acts 20:28 refers to us as the *Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood*. The cross provides entrance into the community, enabling us to be recreated spiritually, and provide access to His grace to complete our transformation.

This Kingdom community is what it's all about. It's the goal of evangelism and discipleship. It's the hope of the world, not only for avoidance of hell, but for the solving of worlds problems, sickness, demonic bondage, despair, etc., which was what Yeshua's earthly ministry was all about.

This doesn't happen by gaining political control, nor dominating the national cultural, but by our presence, even as a persecuted people. The passage that we call the Beatitudes sums this up by describing the candidates of the kingdom, who are therefore blessed: the poor, the meek, those who weep, who make peace, the pure in heart. To these, he says, even as they're suffering persecution, even as the supposed underdogs, 'you are the salt of the earth ... the light of the world. For you, the world exists. You will inherit it all.'

So, where does judgement come in? It looks to me like it's those who resist or persecute this company, or reject the message when it has been proclaimed and demonstrated, that are judged to hell. But those who even so much as give a glass of cold water to a citizen of the Kingdom of God, gain a share in the world to come.

**how does it work?** -- So, first I say that the kingdom is the establishing a divine presence on the earth, yet I said that it isn't about political or cultural control, but probably as a persecuted people. Does that make sense?

It does if you consider that political control is probably one of the least effective methods of influencing society. A member of parliament, a cabinet minister, or even a head of state has absolutely no control over whether a policeman on the corner is accepting bribes or is doing his

work honestly. The policeman's believing neighbour has more influence.

We've thought that applying kingdom dynamics involved control from the top, down. Dictating morals from such a distance has only made us odious. Some define it as letting our light shine, but we've been doing it from too far away for them to see the light in a meaningful way. Yeshua demonstrated kingdom dynamics while in the pub, dining with the wrong crowd -- the same people over whom the leaders then and now were trying to control with their laws. The persecution we are receiving now, in many cases, is as much a slingshot effect from too much control from the top as it is true persecution for righteousness sake.

However, when a truly transformed community begins to live out the dynamics of the kingdom from up close, right next door, on the street, wherever friends meet friends, then we'll start seeing what effect salt can have on the earth. When the witness they receive is from what they observe of our lives, and by the power of God flowing from up close where they can see what's up our sleeve; not so much by our expert talking or what they hear on TV occasionally, then the other things will begin to happen as well. People will have heard the message clearly and unmistakably, and therefore left without an excuse. Persecution will be from those who thus heard but still hardened their hearts. That's the group that will, for sure, be judged in eternal fire.

*Ephesians 4:17-20 -- ...do not live any longer as pagans live, with their sterile ways of thinking. Their intelligence has been shrouded in darkness, and they are estranged from the life of God, because of the ignorance in them, which in turn comes from resisting God's will. They have lost all feeling, so they have abandoned themselves to sensuality, practising any kind of impurity and always greedy for more.*

As much as we like to personalise passages from the Bible, we should understand that people described in this passage are relatively few and far between in our culture. In Paul's time, it is said, all who lived in the district of Asia heard the gospel, and saw a clear demonstration of it. It wasn't just a nice message from a TV preacher, whom you can't be sure if it's really working for or not. It wasn't a bunch of pat one-liners parroted by someone in a suit who knew how to make a sales pitch. It was the lives of people who had put their lives on the line, who had obviously been transformed for the better, and signs and wonders were happening. Many of them saw and heard the real thing, and *still* refused to believe. Continually resisting the obvious dulled their minds so that it didn't matter any more what was right or wrong. They had lost all feeling. That's also the context of II Thessalonians 1:6-9.

Judgement, as in eternal fire, is for the likes of them, yes, but in our time many of the judgements Yeshua spoke of are for those in the church. We've been so lukewarm that the real witness just isn't getting out.

Brothers and sisters, we've got our work cut out for us.

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if you want a simpler explanation of what the Kingdom of God is all about,  
check out my illustrated e-book at the following website:

[www.tinyurl.com/HappyKingdom](http://www.tinyurl.com/HappyKingdom)