

THE JUDGEMENT, WHEREIN GOD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY MEET

by Rick McKinney, 2025

That all human beings will face a judgement before God after we die is a belief shared by all monotheist faiths – Jews, Moslems and Christians. And the God who judges us is believed to be just, wise and merciful. But how is it that God's merciful love and truth filled justice meet and even kiss one another (Ps. 85:10)? For Christians it meets at the blood stained cross and Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. But, of course, they and all others must still contend, in nakedness, before the intense scrutiny of God's consuming fire, a fire that bears forth both piercing light and burning love upon each person's life (Heb. 4:12-13, 12:29, SS 8:6, 1 Cor. 4:5). The intensity of that consuming fire may indeed differ among people according to their moral culpability (Lk. 12:47-48). This scrutiny may also be less severe for those who have already examined themselves and sought forgiveness (Sir. 18:20, 1 Cor. 11:28-32, 2 Cor. 13:5). And for those saintly souls who, through faith filled perseverance have detached or rid themselves of fleshly desires and pursuits (Col. 3:8-10, 1 Pt. 2:1-3, Eph. 4:30-32), may find that the purgative fire of God's loving wrath has already done its primary work and thus illumination (2 Cor. 4:6) and deepening union and participation in the divine nature await the blest (2 Pt. 1:4, Phil. 3:8-11), who may be prepared at the end of their life to approach God in true holiness, without which no one can see God (1 Thes 3:13, Heb. 12:14).

It is indeed forgiveness that we, the unholy, all need and what we, with independent freedom, can choose, by God's grace, to give to one another (Mt. 6:14-15, Eph. 4:32). In the life to come we can't expect to pass through the judgement of God's consuming fire by, perhaps, our usual deflection but must approach Him humbly on bended knees (Is. 45:23, Phil. 2:10). Our instinctive reactions may resemble a cornered animal, and be one of **fight**, including defiance and justification (Gen. 3:12 and 4:9, 1 Sam. 4:8-9, Lk. 4:34, Mt. 26:65-68, Rev. 12:7-8), or one of **flight** (1 Sam. 17:51, Mt. 27:4-5, Lk. 3:7, Lk 8:32-33), or one of **freeze** (Dn. 5:5-6, 2 Mac. 3:22-24, Mt. 22:12, 28:2-4, Ac. 9:7, Heb. 12:18-21), or one, by God's grace, of **falling** face down and asking **forgiveness** (Lk. 15:21. 18:13, Eze. 1:28, Is. 6:5-7, 1 Cor. 14:25), even if we need to rely upon the intercessions of those prayerful souls who beseech God on our behalf (Mk. 2:4-5, 1 Tim. 2:1, Phil. 4:6, Jam. 5:15-16, 2 Tim. 1:16-18).

If we have but a glimpse of God the Father's love for us as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ (Rm. 6:4), then perhaps we also have the grace to fall face down and ask His forgiveness when confronted by our sinful ways (Mk. 7:21-23, Gal. 5:19-21). In the age to come we can't truly repent by changing our mortal words, deeds and attitudes, but we can ask and receive forgiveness and bathe in that forgiveness. And if we have true

appreciation of our own forgiveness, then we can't help but freely give it to one another (Mt. 6:14-15, 18:21-35, Col. 3:13), which is often a key condition for our own inner healing of wounds and afflictions that have sometimes left us broken in our hearts, minds and bodies (Mt. 11:28-30, Ps. 147:3, Mk. 5:25-34) or made us captive to lies about ourselves (Jn. 9:2-3, Mt. 11: 16-19) or the triggering of thoughts and impulses that enslave us (Rm. 7:19, 24).

It is Jesus who has been anointed to heal our whole person – physically, morally, spiritually, socially, psychologically and every other way (Is. 61: 1-3, Lk. 4:18-19, Mk. 2:6-11) both in time and eternity. For God has created us and loves us with an everlasting love (Ps. 103:17, Jer. 31:3-4) and He desires that we come to know His love both now and into eternity (Jn. 17). Our destiny may well depend on how, by God's grace, we have habitually trained ourselves in godliness (1 Tim. 4:6-8, Phil 4:8) or perhaps how we have turned to God and changed our ways later in life (Eze. 18:23) or perhaps by just coming to Christ as a little child in trust filled love (Mk. 10:14). There are also people like St. Timothy who appear to grow up with godly backgrounds (2 Tim. 1:5). In any case, our entire selves are laid before a loving God who sees all we have ever done or said or thought or felt in our hearts and nothing is hid from Him (Ps. 139). He is a lion (Rev. 5:5), and who, while not tame, is, as C.S. Lewis wrote, good.

As noted above, it would seem, that when we are directly confronted with our sins, we can take four approaches – Flight, Fight, Freeze or Forgiveness. The first three, if our free will has indeed chosen to stick to them, is the way of hell and inner torment wherein we do not allow the consuming fire of God's light and truth to do its work of purification and healing. Of course, that same light can also reveal our loving impulses, choices and actions (Mt. 25:23, 40, 2 Cor. 3:17-18, Gal. 5:22-25).

My dear mother related how, when undergoing a hysterectomy in her 50's, she dreamed of God showing her various moments in her life and how she was joyfully responding - yes, yes, yes. Christians, who believe in a God who has lovingly died and triumphantly risen for them. would seem to have an advantage over those who would try to fight and justify themselves or to flee in fright or to be frozen in fear. Thus, the gospel message with its good news of God's love is extremely important as well as the need to turn from and renounce our old sinful and harmful ways in repentance (2 Cor. 4:2, Ps. 51). Jesus said that those who have been forgiven much, love much (Lk. 7:47). It is the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, who perhaps is that consuming fire and light who helps us truly see ourselves as God sees us (the good, the bad, the ugly and the beloved child redeemed by love) as well truly seeing Christ, the loving righteous one, and truly seeing the lying and destructive enemy within and without that deserves renunciation and condemnation (Jn. 16: 7-14, Ac. 10:38).

May we all come to know and to bask in the fire of God's truth and love.