

The Meaning of Judgment

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Part III

"The Forgiving Dream" (T-29.IX) (cont.)

(3:1) All figures in the dream are idols, made to save you from the dream.

Everything we perceive and believe is outside us is part of the dream. These are the idols, and their purpose is to make the outside dream real to protect us from the dream within our minds, which we do not want to look at. Course students compromise this over and over again by trying in whatever way they can to make some aspect of the external dream reality. That is why many students place such great emphasis on seeing Jesus or the Holy Spirit as doing things for them in the world. That is a subtle way of making Them part of the illusion, whereas in the Course Jesus asks us to take the illusion to the truth, not to bring the truth to the illusion. We have a strong investment in making the outside dream real, because if it is real outside, we do not have to look at the dream within our minds. What better way to make it seem real than to have God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit operate in it?

That is why it is a mistake to confuse *A Course in Miracles* with New Age thought systems. The Course in no way compromises the truth that the entire physical universe is an illusion. But we want to make the figures in the dream reality, including the Holy Spirit and Jesus so we are protected from the underlying dream inside our minds.

(3:2) Yet they [all of these idols] are part of what they have been made to save you *from*.

These idols were made to save us from the idol we made within our own minds (the ego thought system) that says, "I have stolen from God and I now exist. I have what I have stolen. I no longer have to give it back, and I exist on my own. And now God exists outside me." The ego begins with that initial thought of judgment, which is the beginning of the dream. It then becomes a full-blown dream within our minds that we are different from God, that we have stolen from God and sinned against Him. And our guilt over this now tells us God will punish us. This is the terrifying dream within our own minds. It is so terrifying that we do not look at it, but project it so that it now seems to be outside us. And anything that roots us further in the dream outside will nicely serve the ego's purpose, even if it goes under the name of God, which is what religions have done for centuries. It is extremely tempting for people to do the

same thing with *A Course in Miracles*—to bring part of the truth into the illusion, making the illusion real. If you do that, you will never get out of the dream, because you will not know it is only a dream.

(3:3) Thus does an idol keep the dream alive and terrible, for who could wish for one unless he were in terror and despair?

The "you" Jesus is referring to in these passages is the mind, the part of the mind that chooses—what I refer to as the decision maker. It is the part of our minds that has first identified with the ego thought system. It is a thought system of terror and despair that tells us we need to protect ourselves from the terror and despair by denying it, which means we would never look at it again. And then we project it and see it outside ourselves. That is why we need a world of specific people and specific objects. We project all of these thoughts of sin, guilt, and judgment so they are no longer seen within, but outside. As long as we believe in the reality of the idol, we will never know that the idol really rests within our own minds.

(3:4) And this the idol [anything in the world outside of us] represents, and so its worship is the worship of despair and terror, and the dream from which they come.

This is true for the idols of specialness we think are wonderful and make us happy as well as the idols of specialness we hate. Earlier in the text, in "The Obstacles to Peace" (T-19.IV), Jesus speaks about this in another form: "While you believe that it [the body] can give you pleasure, you will also believe that it can bring you pain" (T-19.IV-A.17:11). Pleasure and pain are opposite sides of the same illusion. Both of them make the body real because both say there is something outside us that can make us either happy or unhappy and bring us pain. The truth is that the only thing that can bring us happiness is choosing the Love of the Holy Spirit. The only thing that can bring us pain is choosing the ego. That is all. There is nothing else.

The lines here represent the same idea. That is why we become so invested in the world. It is easy to fall into this trap, even as a student of a course that teaches that there is no world, for we still believe that external behaviors somehow mean something. They mean nothing in and of themselves. Their meaning lies only in what meaning we give them. What is important is never anything external—not what bodies do or do not do—but our internal decision to choose either the ego and separation, or Jesus and joining. Once we focus our attention outside and believe what we do is important, helpful, healing, or loving, we are getting caught in specialness, worshipping the idol of specialness. We will think that we are serving a function of healing or love, but it really is an idol of despair and terror.

In worshipping the idols of specialness outside, we are worshipping not only terror, despair, and guilt, but the whole dream, of which terror, despair, and guilt are only components. We are worshipping the dream that we have what we have stolen from God and will never give it

back, for now we exist as individuals on our own. We love terror, despair, and guilt, or we would not feel them all the time. We love them because they make real the thought of separation—the thought of the original judgment against God—which makes real our separate existence from God. That is why we have such a tremendous investment in our self-importance, in being a unique individual—it establishes that the dream is real. The state of terror or despair in our minds says the dream is real; the guilt and the sin are both real.

(3:5) Judgment is an injustice to God's Son, and it *is* justice that who judges him will not escape the penalty he laid upon himself within the dream he made.

It is important to realize that the entire thought system of the ego is real within itself. It is not reality, but within the dream itself it is all very real. When we sleep at night and dream, we will experience the dream as very real. This entire world is a dream. As Jesus explains elsewhere (e.g., T-18.II.5:13-14), there is no difference between what we call our sleeping dreams and what he refers to as our waking dreams, such as we are experiencing right now. They are all the same—just different expressions of the thoughts within our minds. Within the ego dream, the fear of punishment is very real. Within that dream, our fear of experiencing harm—physical or emotional—is very real. We are not asked, as students of *A Course in Miracles*, to deny what our experiences are. We are asked, however, not to make these experiences reality. There is a crucial difference between those two approaches.

In other words, we all experience fear, and we believe our fear is due to something external to us that can impinge upon us. The ego interprets this as the wrath of God visited upon us—that is our experience. We may not consciously experience it as God's wrath, but we certainly do experience fear as caused by something external to us. Remember, our own bodies are just as external to our minds as everyone else's body is. But that does not make it reality. That is where the Christian Churches were mistaken; they took their experience of fear and wrote a theology about it. They said this is the reality of God: God sees our sin as real and has a plan to help us atone for it, basically a plan of murder. The plan then becomes one of suffering and sacrifice. If we believe we are sacrificing so God won't be angry at us, then we will feel good about sacrificing. But that does not make it reality. Our experience is that the sun rises and sets, but that does not make it reality. In reality, it is the earth rotating on its own axis that makes it appear as if the sun moves around the earth. And in fact, it is the earth that moves around the sun. Similarly, people may experience the Holy Spirit or Jesus doing things for them in the world, but that does not mean that They really are. *Don't confuse your experience with reality.* The ego always interprets our experiences in order to construct a theology that serves its purposes, which of course is why we have the experience in the first place. Within our dream, whenever we make a judgment we are asserting that we are different from God; we have separated from Him, sinned against Him, and have stolen from Him. Our guilt over that will then demand that we not escape the penalty of God's anger. This whole world, which is a world of change and death, then stands as the witness to the fact that what the ego has

taught us is true. If our existence, which we call life, was ultimately stolen from God, then when God steals back the life we stole from Him we will be without life, which means we will be dead. That is the ego's interpretation of our death.

(3:6) God knows of justice, not of penalty.

God's justice of course has nothing to do with justice as we think of it. God's justice states that nothing happened. If nothing happened, there is no guilt and no punishment.

(3:7) But in the dream of judgment you attack and are condemned; and wish to be the slave of idols, which are interposed between your judgment and the penalty it brings.

But we are not condemned by God. We are condemned by the projection of our own guilt, which makes up a God Who is angry. We then deny the whole dynamic and make up a world in which we are continually condemning and judging others, while believing they condemned and judged us first. But our judgment is within our minds; that is our guilt. We project it out and make up a world of idols that will punish us; and we actually think there is a world out there that affects us. This is all part of the dream, which seems very real from within the dream.