

James 4:11-12 in the Navajo Bible

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Shik'isóó, t'áadoo nichxó'ógo ahaa yádaakti'í. T'áa háiida Christ bee ak'is nilíigo nichxó'ógo baa yájíłti'ígíí, doodaii' baa níjít'ínígíí éí Diyin God yee has'áanii nichxó'ógo baa yájíłti' áádóó baa níjít'íigo át'é. Jó, bee haz'áanii baa níjít'íigo bee haz'áanii doo yik'ehgóó ááníłii jileeh, bee haz'áanii yik'i hodii'aahii jileeh. ¹² Diyin God t'éiyá bee haz'áanii íł'íinii áádóó ánihwii'aahii nilí. T'áa bí t'éiyá yisdá'íiníł, áádóó ałdó' í'doodíłigo yíneel'á. Áko nishá' ha'át'í nishłí nínizingo bił k'ééhót'íinii baa nánít'í? (James 4:11-12)¹

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you- who are you to judge your neighbor? (James 4:11-12)²

Discussion

In this passage there are six examples of a word that could be translated "judge" (whether "to judge" or "a judge"). In NIV's English there is no substantial difference among the six terms, but in the Navajo and in the Greek the first three and the last one represent one term (Navajo: *baa níjít'ínígíí*, *baa níjít'íigo*, *baa níjít'íigo*, *baa nánít'í*; Greek: *krinōn*, *krinei*, *krineis*, *krinōn*), whereas the fourth and the fifth examples represent another term (Navajo: *yik'i hodii'aahii* [*jileeh*], *yik'i hodii'aahii* [*nilí*]; Greek: *kritēs*, *kritēs*). In Greek the first set of terms are all verbs, the second set both nouns. See table 1.

Table 1
Two Different Words for Judging

	Seq	Navajo	English (NIV)	Greek Text	Greek Form
Vs. 11	1	<i>baa níjít'ínígíí</i>	judges (him)	<i>krinōn</i>	<i>krinō</i> (<i>krinein</i>)
	2	<i>baa níjít'íigo</i>	judges (it)	<i>krinei</i>	<i>krinō</i> (<i>krinein</i>)
	3	<i>baa níjít'íigo</i>	judge (the law)	<i>krineis</i>	<i>krinō</i> (<i>krinein</i>)
	4	<i>yik'i hodii'aahii</i> (<i>jileeh</i>)	sitting in judgment	<i>kritēs</i>	<i>kritēs</i>
Vs.12	5	<i>yik'i hodii'aahii</i> (<i>nilí</i>)	Judge	<i>kritēs</i>	<i>kritēs</i>
	6	<i>baa nánít'í</i>	to judge	<i>krinōn</i>	<i>krinō</i> (<i>krinein</i>)

The difference between *baa níjít'í* and *yik'i hodii'aahii*, on the one hand, and between *krinō* and *kritēs*, on the other, might seem relatively small. Actually, however, the difference is

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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quite significant. When *baa níjít'í* (or related form) is used the reference is to people; when *yik'i hodii'aahii* is used the reference is to God. Perhaps this could have been done differently, but in fact it was done this way and the result is that the Navajo translators show that they were sensitive to a seemingly small but actually quite significant difference in the Greek.

Forms closely related to the one used in examples 4 and 5 above (the forms that refer to God) appear also in the following passages. In each case this term (*ánihwii'aahii*, *ánihwii'aahii*, *ánihwii'aahii*, *yik'i hodii'aahii*) translates Greek *kritēs*, as in James 4:11-12, and in each case it refers to God as the righteous Judge before whom all mankind stands at the last day.

K'ad ts'idá t'áá ákogi é'ét'ééjí naat'á ch'ah shá hasht'e'niit'á, éí Bóhólníihii t'áá bí ts'idá t'áá ákogi ááníłgo ánihwii'aahii [Greek: kritēs] jílíinii hainíłkqáadi shaazhdoo'áát, nidi doo t'áá shí t'éiyá da, hodidoaltséét biniyé ayóó'ádahó'níigo háká dadééz'í'ii atdó' t'áá attso bitaazhdoonih. (2 Timothy 4:8)

Shik'isóó, Diyin God doo nihá nihodiyoo'aat daígúí biniyé t'áadoo atch'i' saad dahonot'íní. Jó'akon, ánihwii'aahii [Greek: kritēs] ch'é'ėtiindéé' sizí! (James 5:9)

Bi'déédzít' yéédáá' t'áadoo nát'áá' ná'éédzít' da, ti'hooznii' yéédáá' t'áadoo it hóótyée' da, nidi Diyin God ts'idá t'áá ákogi át'éego ánihwii'aahii [Greek: kritēs] yaa ádeet'á. (1 Peter 2:23)

Áádóó yá'qashdi iinéé' ayóó úts'a'go kóníigo diséts'áá', K'ad ląą, nihiDiyin God bibee adziilii áádóó bee bóhólníihgo bił haz'áanii índá biChrist bibee óhólníihii k'ad dahoníle'! Háálá nihik'isóó yik'i hodii'aahii, éí nihiDiyin God bináát t'áá ákwíí jí índá t'áá ákwíí t'éé' yik'i hodii'aahii [Greek: kritēs], bidah ahoolghan. (Revelation 12:10)

There is no point of doctrine at issue here, apart from the obvious fact that people are different from God. I merely wish to draw attention to the fact that the Navajo translation of James 4:11-12 was carefully done and provides a good basis for further study.