

The Final Judgments

(When God's Court Is in Session)



Everybody has a court date with God. Every person will stand before Him and give an account for every bad attitude, every spoken wrong word, every act of misbehavior, every moment of neglecting or refusing to do right, and most importantly, of their decision to reject or receive God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. **THE most important preparation that any person can make in this lifetime is that of being ready to stand before the Judge of judges.** Are you ready?

Some people are terrified at the thought of Divine wrath and God's judgment on sin. They are so unable to cope with it that **they make mental escapes** for themselves. Some **devise their own theology** by saying: *"I don't believe God would send anyone to hell. He will let everyone into heaven at the last moment."* Yet the Bible teaches a literal judgment and that people send themselves to hell by rejecting God's salvation provided through Christ. Others **deny the Bible's inspiration and trustworthiness** by saying: *"I don't believe the Bible and therefore do not believe in hell or a final judgment."* Others attend liberal churches that **avoid teaching the whole Bible** and proclaim what people want to hear. Others **avoid spiritual issues altogether** and say: *"I'm not interested in religion"* or *"I don't want to talk about it."*

The Bible tells us that God's holiness and justness demand that sin be judged. God's holy character will not allow Him to close His eyes and ignore sin (Exodus 34:7). The Bible teaches that there are at least **seven judgments**:

The Central Lesson and Application:

**God is a just & righteous judge who cannot ignore sin.
Everyone will have their day in His court. Be Ready.
Receive Christ. Live for Christ.**

Why You Need This Bible Study:

1. Because, like everyone else, **you are headed for a Judgment Day** where you will give an account of your life.
2. Because **you can be prepared** for a good outcome on Judgment Day.
3. Because the final judgments are a major emphasis in the Bible. God loves you and **He wants you to be prepared to pass His final exam.** It is as if God is saying, *"I'm going to give you a final exam on Judgment Day. Your eternal destiny is at stake. I love you so much that I am giving you the answers in advance. The answers are in My Word, the Bible. I want you to pass the final exam and will do everything possible to help you. The rest is up to you."*
4. Because it can **change your life.** This information can influence you to adjust your attitudes, behavior, communication, and relationship with others for the better.
5. Because it can **fire up your passion for reaching your lost friends and family** with the Gospel so they can pass their final exam before God's court.

7 FUTURE JUDGMENTS

I. The Judgment Seat of **CHRIST** (The Bema).

Every believer will appear before the (Gk. Bema) *"the judgment seat of Christ"* (NIV) to receive *"...whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body"* (2 Cor. 5:10 NLT). The *bema* has **nothing to do with judging**

who will enter heaven or not. This has already been settled for the believer when he or she accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. Non-Christians will **not** be at the *bema*. Their judgment is the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). The *bema* is **for Christians only**. The *bema* is a judgment of the believer's faithfulness and works **AFTER** salvation (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 4:5). The *bema* is more like an **awards banquet** rather than a tribunal that issues punishment. The *bema* is believed to take place immediately after the rapture.

The Life Application Bible Notes explains: "While eternal life is a free gift given on the basis of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8,9), each of us will still be judged by Christ. This judgment will reward us for how we have lived. God's gracious gift of salvation does not free us from the requirement for faithful obedience. All Christians must give account for how they have lived (see Matthew 16:27; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)."

The New Testament teaches that God will reward His faithful followers at the *bema* with "**crowns.**" A crown (a laurel wreath in the 1st century) symbolized **victory** in the ancient games. It was equivalent to the gold medal in the modern Olympic competition. There are five crowns mentioned in the New Testament:

1. The **ETERNAL** Crown (Imperishable)—Winning over temptation & the flesh through Godly self-discipline (1 Cor. 9:24-27).
2. The Crown of **JOY** (Rejoicing)—Winning in the mission of evangelism, leading people to Christ (1 Thess. 2:19-20; Phil. 4:1).
3. The Crown of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**—Winning at finishing well, living a life of obedience to God, and longing for Christ's coming (2 Tim. 4:7-8; 2:5).
4. The Crown of **LIFE**—Winning over life's hardship & suffering through perseverance & faithfulness (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10).
5. The Crown of **GLORY**—Winning at spiritual leadership by serving the Church, teaching God's Word, witnessing about Christ, being an example of Godliness, and motivated by eagerness & willingness free of greed (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Bruce Wilkinson writes: "Although your eternal destination is based on your belief, how you spend eternity is based on your behavior while on earth." (*A Life God Rewards*. p.23.). God is watching & keeping a record. Everything we say & do —matters for eternity. God wants to reward you for being faithful, sacrificial & for serving Him. Live for Christ today so that you will be ready to stand before him at the judgment seat of Christ (*bema*).

II. The Judgment of **BABYLON** (Symbolically the One World Religion and Government of the Antichrist in the Tribulation).

In Revelation 17-18 a woman is described as *"...Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World"* (17:5 NLT). Also, the woman was *"...sitting on a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, and blasphemies against God were written all over it."* (17:3 NLT).

Most Bible teachers agree that this is describing a **one-world religion** (the Prostitute) that is working together with a one-world government (the Prostitute is sitting **on** the beast) under the leadership of the Antichrist during the Tribulation period. The Antichrist will control the world through two primary instruments: a **one-world government** and a **one-world religion**. Watch the news for the European Union and the Ecumenical movement of mainline liberal churches.

Revelation 18:1-8 and 20 tell us that God will judge the one world religion and government. God will judge it because...

- It is the home of demonic activity (18:2),
- Its sin has piled up to heaven (18:5),
- It is proud and selfish, flaunting its luxury (18:7),
- The world nations were deceived and led astray by its occult practices [sorceries, witchcraft, black-magic arts, magic spell, drug abuse—the Greek word is “*Pharmakia*” from where we get our English “*Pharmacy*”] (18:23),
- It murdered and martyred the prophets and God’s people (18:24 also compare 19:1-2).

The judgment of Babylon will take place just before the Second Coming of Christ.

III. The Judgment of the **BEAST** (The Antichrist), the **False Prophet** (the Assistant to the Antichrist that promotes the one world religion), and the **Armies of Antichrist at Armageddon**.

Jesus Christ will personally judge the Antichrist and the false prophet at his Second Coming (Rev. 19:11-21). Christ will just speak the word and “*strike down*” the Antichrist and the nations (19:15 NLT). The Antichrist and the false prophet will be “*...thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur*” (19:20 NLT). The armies of the Antichrist will be killed “*...by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse...*” (19:21 NLT).

IV. The Judgment of the **NATIONS** (at the end of the Tribulation).

In conjunction with the judgment of the Antichrist, the false prophet, the armies of the Antichrist at Armageddon, there will be another judgment, the judgment of the world nations (Rev. 19:15; Joel 3:1-2, 9-17). God “*...will sit to pronounce judgment on them all*” (Joel 3:12 NLT). In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus is described as coming back “*...in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne...*” (25:31 NLT). “*32 All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*” (25:32-33 NLT).

The **sheep**, which represent the **righteous** at the end of the Tribulation period, will enter into the Millennium and will be part of the Messiah’s kingdom (25:34). However, the **goats**, which represent the **unrighteous**—those who rejected God’s salvation, will be sent to “*...the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons*” (25:41, 46 NLT).

Theologian, Henry C. Thiessen, explains: “It should be noted that the sheep go into the Kingdom, and the goats into eternal punishment. But it should also be noted that though the treatment of the Lord’s brethren, probably Israel, is mentioned in connection with the judgment, the deeper reasons for the judgment lie in the fact that the sheep have eternal life, and the goats do not have it.” (*Lectures in Systematic Theology*, revised by Vernon D. Doerksen, p.391).

V. The Judgment of **ISRAEL**.

After the Second Coming of Christ and just before the beginning of the Millennium, God will judge the nation of Israel so that only the righteous will enter the millennial kingdom. Ezekiel 20:33-38 speaks of God bringing Israel out “*35...into the wilderness...*” where God says: “*35...I will judge you face to face. 36 I will judge you there just as I did your ancestors in the wilderness after bringing them out of Egypt, says the Sovereign*

Lord. 37 I will examine you carefully and hold you to the terms of the covenant. 38 I will purge you of all those who rebel and revolt against me. I will bring them out of the countries where they are in exile, but they will never enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord” (NLT).

A similar description of Israel’s purification and judgment is recorded in Malachi 3:2-6. Again, Dr. Henry C. Thiessen writes: “These judgments are on earth and take place in connection with the Lord’s return. They decide the question as to which of the Israelites shall get back into the holy land and constitute the Israel of the coming age.” (p.390).

VI. The Judgment of **SATAN** and His **ANGELS**.

After Jesus returns to earth to set up His millennial kingdom, Satan will be bound in “*the Abyss*” [bottomless pit] for one thousand years [the Millennium] (Rev. 20:1-2). After the thousand years, Satan will be released. Immediately he deceives the nations and builds a revolt against Christ (Rev. 20:7-9). However, fire comes down from heaven and destroys Satan’s armies (Rev. 20:9), and “*10 ...the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*” (20:10 NLT). Also, all of the angels who fell and followed Satan (also known as demons) are judged and cast into the lake of fire (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). The Bible teaches that Christians will be part of this judgment judging the angels (1 Cor. 6:3). Matthew 25:14 adds that the lake of fire is “*prepared for the devil and his demons.*” (NLT).

VII. The Judgment of the **UNSAVED** at the Great White Throne Judgment.

The final judgment is the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). This judgment takes place after the Millennium. It begins with the resurrection of the wicked (also called the second resurrection which is for those who will experience the second death of the lake of fire—Rev. 20:4-6; Dan. 12:2; Acts 24:15).

Only nonbelievers will be judged at the great white throne judgment. Ecclesiastes 12:14 (NLT) tells us: “*God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.*” Revelation 20:12-13 (NLT) tells us how God keeps a record of the unbeliever’s sins: “*12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. 13 ...all were judged according to their deeds.*”

Notice the distinction between the “books” (plural—the record of sins) and the “book” (singular—the book listing the names of the saved). Only those who have received Christ as their Savior have their name written in the book of life. Revelation 20:15 (NLT) states: “*anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.*” The Bible explains that the lake of fire will be an eternal punishment: “*...they will be tormented day and night forever and ever*” (Rev. 20:10). **Is your name written in the book of life?**

Conclusion

God is a just & righteous judge who cannot ignore sin. Everyone will have their day in His court. Be ready. Receive Christ. Live for Christ.

Suggested Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian dedicate your life to Christ. ► Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and Revelation 20:11-15 and describe the difference between the “bema” the Judgment Seat of Christ versus the Great White Throne Judgment. ► Invite someone to the next Bible study on the End Times.

An Overview of the End Times and the Judgments of God

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