

The Future Judgments

The Judgment of Believer's Works

Passages: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

Time: After the rapture of the church

People: The entire church

Basis: Upon good works

Result: Rewards

This judgment is also known as the judgment seat or bema-seat of Christ, from 2 Corinthians 5:10. It is the only judgment for the Christian, with the basis being our good works. Everyone in this judgment is saved, but some will be rewarded to a greater degree.

The issue is not of discipline but reward. The reward depends upon the quality of one's service, not the quantity. We are each stewards who will give an account for how faithfully we used our life for the Lord (cf. Romans 14:12).

The New Testament mentions five crowns which are often associated with rewards for believers:

- The incorruptible crown, for those who buffet their bodies and do not give in to the flesh (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).
- The crown of rejoicing, for those who are faithful in evangelism (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).
- The crown of righteousness, for those who await Christ's return (2 Timothy 4:8).
- The crown of glory, for the faithful teachers of the Word of God (1 Peter 5:2-4).
- The crown of life, for those who endure temptation (Revelation 2:10).

It is best to view these attributes as not descriptive of the means to gain the crown but of the actual reward itself. That is, if we endure temptation we will gain life, if we long expectantly for Christ's return we will gain righteousness, etc.

The Judgment of Old Testament Saints

Passage: Daniel 12:1-3; Isaiah 26:19

Time: Possibly after the tribulation period

People: All believers before the church age

Basis: Faith in God and named in the book

Result: Probably rewards

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The believers before the church age will be resurrected to enter the millennium. Their salvation is based upon the death of Christ and their faith in God.

The Judgment of Saints of the Tribulation

Passage: Daniel 12:1-3; Revelation 20:4

Time: Possibly after the tribulation period

People: All believers who died in the tribulation

Basis: Upon faith in Christ

Result: Probably rewards

Believers in Christ who accept the Lord during the tribulation and die during the tribulation will also be resurrected to return with the Lord at the second coming.

The Judgment of Jewish Survivors of the Tribulation

Passage: Ezekiel 20:34-38; Matthew 25:1-30

Time: After the tribulation period

People: All Jews who survive the tribulation

Basis: Upon faith in Christ

Result: Entry into the millennial kingdom

All surviving Jews will be regathered to the land of Palestine. The unsaved will not enter the land (Ezekiel 20:38) while the saved will enjoy the blessing of the New Covenant (Ezekiel 20:37). This group will go into the kingdom in earthly bodies and will reproduce.

The Judgment of Gentile Survivors of the Tribulation

Passage: Matthew 25:31-46; Joel 3:2

Time: After the tribulation period

People: All Gentiles surviving the tribulation

Basis: Faith seen in their treatment of Israel

Result: Entry into the millennial kingdom

This is a judgment upon individual Gentiles, not upon whole nations. The word "nations" in Matthew 25:32 is usually translated "Gentiles."

This is not a judgment of works but rather of genuine faith which under great tribulation will demonstrate itself in selfless acts of mercy toward Jewish people. Those who have saving faith and

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demonstrate that faith by their good works will enter the kingdom. They will also continue in earthly bodies and reproduce.

Judgment of Satan and Fallen Angels

Passage: Revelation 20:10; Jude 6-7

Time: After the millennial kingdom

People: All fallen angels

Basis: Upon their rebellion against God

Result: Eternal punishment in the lake of fire

This is the final sentence which forever confines Satan to the lake of fire. The angels who are judged will experience the same fate. Believers apparently will be involved in this judgment (1 Corinthians 6:3).

The Judgment of the Unsaved

Passage: Revelation 20:11-15

Time: After the millennial kingdom

People: All the unsaved from all ages

Basis: Upon evil works

Result: Eternal punishment in the lake of fire

After the millennium, the unredeemed souls in Hades will be bodily resurrected to judgment, also known as the great white throne judgment.

They are involved in this judgment because their names were not contained in the book of life (Revelation 20:15) since they are unsaved. Their judgment will be on the basis of their deeds. The books that contain their deeds will prove the justice of their eternal punishment and their end will be the lake of fire.

It is likely that their deeds will also determine the severity of the eternal punishment, as well as the content of the revelation they have received (cf. Luke 12:47-48; Matthew 11:21-24).

In other words, the judgment of each one's deeds will depend on the extent to which he knew the right thing to do. The greater the knowledge, the greater the responsibility, and the greater the corresponding punishment. This parallels our understanding of the varying rewards in heaven.