

6. ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

One life

We each have just one life to live, and after that we all face judgment, with Jesus as our Judge. For believers it will be a judgment to determine rewards, but for the lost it will be to determine their punishment.

John 5:22 *In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge.*

Hebrews 9:27 *And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment.*

Revelation 22:12 *“Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.*

Believers - freedom from condemnation

Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for everyone's sins – all the past, present and future sins of all mankind have all been paid for. All we have to do is to repent of our sins and to accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and the Lord of our lives, who as the Son of God paid for all our sins, to receive the gift of salvation. None of us deserve forgiveness, and there is nothing we can do to earn our forgiveness or to wash away our sins. It is by God's grace that we are saved, not by any good deeds we could ever do. Jesus did it all for us, and hence we must never fear judgement.

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

Romans 10:9 *If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jesus' death brought us victory over the power of death, which is Satan, and delivered us from the bondage that comes from the fear of death. We as believers should not fear death. (See also Hebrews 2:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-22).*

How to live now

With the peace of God

God wants us to live our lives in Him and for Him. When we do so we can receive the peace of God, and not have any fear for the future, or of death.

John 14:27 *“I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.*

1 John 4:17-18 *And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.*

In God

Jesus tells us that Father is in Him, and works through Him, and wants us to do the same. He even says that apart from Him we can do nothing - i.e. of spiritual value.

John 14:10 *Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.*

John 14:20 *When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.*

John 15:4-5 *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.*

We are all called to be holy

God does not want us to stop our work or to withdraw from society, as some have understood the command to 'be holy'. Jesus even said that both He and the Father were always working, and so should we, while we are still alive and able to do so. Rather, the Bible tells us to 'be holy' in everything that we do.

John 5:17 *But Jesus replied, "My Father is always working, and so am I."*

John 9:4 *We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work.*

1 Peter 1:13-16 *So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.*

So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

To hold onto our hope

God wants us to hold onto our hope, or trust in God, and in His character. We are called to live out our lives by holding onto our belief and trust in Him.

Hebrews 10:23 *Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.*

To encourage others

We are called always be an encouragement to others, and not to neglect meeting together with fellow believers.

Hebrews 10:24 *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.*

Hebrews 10:25 *And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

To cease living a life of deliberately sinning

Hebrews 10:26-31 *Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. For we know the one who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The Lord will judge his own people." It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

To remain faithful to God, despite the circumstances, and even persecution.

Hebrews 10:32-35 *Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ.*

Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord.

Remember the great reward it brings you!

To display patient endurance

Hebrews 10:36-7 *Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay.*

To hold onto our faith

Faith has been called the 'currency of heaven'. We are saved by faith, and called to live by faith. Hebrews 10:38-9 *And my righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.* " *But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.*

To look after the poor

God wants us to look after the poor, and our help and gifts to them are always noticed by God. Paul also set an example in a willingness to care for the poor. Matthew 25:35-6 *For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'* Galatians 2:10 *Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.*

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

The following portion of Paul's 2nd letter to the Thessalonians provides a good summary of the judgments to come when Christ returns, both for the saved and the unsaved.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-9 *And God will use this persecution to show his justice and to make you worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering. In his justice he will pay back those who persecute you. And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power.*

We will all face judgment, whether to determine our rewards, or our punishment.

Romans 14:10-12 *So why do you condemn another Christian? Why do you look down on another Christian? Remember, each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God. For the Scriptures say, " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow to me and every tongue will confess allegiance to God.' " Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God.*

The judgment of believers

All believers will appear before Jesus to give an account of what they have done – the believers to be rewarded, the unsaved to be punished. This is not for our salvation or for judgement, but for our rewards. We will be judged on our faithfulness to God, what we did with what He gave us, and how we obeyed His commands. Did we seek to and do our best to carry out the plan for our lives that He created us for? Did we share our faith? Did we do acts of love and kindness? How far did we surrender to Him and His will? Did we overcome sin in our lives? Ultimately, we will be judged on how faithfully we served Christ. These rewards will be for all of us, whatever our position in society, or our calling in the church. The rewards will be based on the nature of our works, whether it was God-honouring work or done for ourselves and our own motives.

Romans 8:1 *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*

2 Corinthians 5:10 *For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.*

Ephesians 6:8 *Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.*

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?*

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 *But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.*

The Bema Seat Judgement

A bema seat is a raised platform used to announce decision, judgements, etc.

The Bema occurs after the Rapture and before the 2nd Coming, at the beginning of our 7 year honeymoon in glory with our Bridegroom in the house He has prepared for us, the New Jerusalem. The term 'Judgment Seat' or Bema was well known to those in Corinth, the church where Paul introduced the term "the Bema." The Bema was a judicial place where an athlete who had competed in the games had to stand before the judge and attest that he had "competed according to the rules"- rules of diet, training, and moral purity. If you did not run according to the rules you do not get the prize. In the same way the Christian will be judged, but not for sin as that was settled in Christ, but for our faithfulness.

Rewards

What do we mean by "rewards"? It is that which will continue into the coming kingdom of Christ. It is what Jesus meant by "seek first the kingdom of God" and "make for yourselves purses that do not wear out." It is what Paul meant by "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is what he meant by "an imperishable wreath." It is what John meant by "that you might receive a full reward." It is what Paul meant by "I seek for the profit that increases to your account" and "we shall reign with Him." (Tommy Nelson; preachit.org)

Five Crowns

We receive salvation by faith, but we will receive rewards for our faithfulness – often identified as 'crowns'. Some will most likely receive more crowns than others. The word for crown in the Greek is the word used for the laurel leaf, awarded to the winner of a race. Various crowns are mentioned in the Bible as our rewards, and they last forever.

Revelation 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.*

1. The Incorruptible crown

We have run the race and finished strongly. We have not given up. Yet it is still only by His grace. This crown lasts forever.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25 *Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win. All athletes practice strict self-control. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.*

2. The Crown of Rejoicing

This is the crown that is awarded to those who are faithful in sharing their faith with others. Those obedient to fulfilling the Great Commission.

1 Thessalonians 2: 19-20 *After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! Yes, you are our pride and joy.*

Daniel 12:3 *Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like stars forever.*

3. The Crown of Life

This is awarded to those who persevere under trials and persecution, even unto death, but never turn away from Jesus.

James 1:12 *God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

Revelations 2:10 NLT *Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The Devil will throw some of you into prison and put you to the test. You will be persecuted for 'ten days.' Remain faithful even when you are facing death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

4. The Crown of Righteousness

This is awarded to those who long for the appearing of Christ. Those who long for that day.

2 Timothy 4:8 *And now the prize awaits me - the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return.*

5. The Crown of Glory

This crown is awarded to everyone who ministers to others, not for their own benefit, but in obedience to God, so that others may grow in the Lord.

Philippians 4:1 *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.*

1 Peter 5:4 *And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honour.*

Laying Down Our Crowns

These crowns are not awarded as the result of our righteousness, but because of God's favour and grace towards us. That is why we lay down our crowns before Him.

Revelation 4:10-11 *the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased."*

The Judgement of those who are saved during the Tribulation

My understanding is that the two witnesses and the 144,000 from Israel will witness during the period of the tribulation to those who are not included when the church is raptured. Hence there will be a group of people saved during this period. The following verse appears to relate to them:

Revelation 20:4-6 *Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

The Judgement of Satan and his followers

Satan has already been judged. Satan had freedom to move about in the spirit realm, including entering directly into the presence of God. Satan rebelled against God, and there was a war in heaven between the armies of the Lord and Satan's rebellious angels. Satan was defeated and expelled from heaven, cast down and confined to earth. Because Satan has already been judged, he will be the first thrown into the eternal fire, and this will be prior to the final judgment day of the Great White Throne Judgement. The fallen angels will follow him there later.

John 16:11 *Judgment will come because the prince of this world has already been judged.*

Revelation 12:7-9 *Then there was war in heaven. Michael and the angels under his command fought the dragon and his angels. And the dragon lost the battle and was forced out of heaven. This great dragon - the ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.*

On the return of Jesus at the second coming Satan is locked away for 1,000 years. At the end of this period he is released for a short while, in which he raises a vast army to attack God's people (Israel) but is defeated by God and thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur, joining the beast and the false prophet, for eternity.

Revelation 20:10 *Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Hell was prepared for Satan and his hoard of fallen angels. It was never God's intention to send men to hell. Yet after the fall, many men decide to follow Satan and not God. These people will join Satan in hell and experience eternal separation from God.

Matthew 25:41 *Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons!'*

2 Peter 2:4 *For God did not spare even the angels when they sinned; he threw them into hell, in gloomy caves and darkness until the judgment day.*

Jude 1:6 *And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the day of judgment*

The Great White Throne Judgement

The Great White Throne Judgment underscores the fact that God's justice will be done, and that outside of Christ, His justice will be terrifying, sure, and final. The fallen angels will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgement and will be cast into hell at the same time as the sinners.

Daniel 7:9-10 *I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, and a river of fire flowed from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened.*

Jude 1:6 *And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment.*

Revelation 20:11-15 *And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. 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. The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.*

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