

Final Judgment Upon Whom?

Introduction

The Bible clearly states that Judgment will follow death. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27) We all will die some day and according to this scripture, we all will face judgment. The time and date is out there somewhere in the future, closer for some of us than for others. It's interesting to learn that death is an appointment. Did you know that 55,300,000 people die every year? That's over 150,000 every day, 6316 every hour, more than 105 every minute and 2 people every second. They all had an appointment with death. That's one appointment that we wish we could break but it is inevitable.

There are different judgments. We will not all be summoned to the same court. By the way, these judgments have no court of appeal. The Bible talks about two judgments, one for the lost or unsaved and one for the saved.

The believer will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."(II Corinthians 5:10) The resurrected saints will be rewarded.

Remember, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:1). The application of "no condemnation" is exclusive to those who walk after the Spirit. The Christian that walks in the flesh will also appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. They will experience loss but will not lose his or her salvation.

Paul pictures Christ seated on a magistrate's judgment seat, The Bema, as though He were a judge of an athletic competition, a place where rewards were given out and losses clearly seen by all in attendance. In other words, it is a reward seat and portrays a time of rewards or loss of rewards following examination, but it is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins. Such would be inconsistent with the finished work of Christ on the Cross-, because He totally paid the penalty for our sins.

This event will occur immediately following the rapture or resurrection of the church after it is caught up to be with the Lord in the air as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. [J. Hampton Keathley III](#), of Bible.org, offers three great scriptures in support of rewards instead of judgment.

(1) In Luke 14:12-14, reward is associated with the resurrection and the rapture is when the church is resurrected.

(2) In Revelation 19:8, when the Lord returns with His bride at the end of the tribulation, she is seen already rewarded. Her reward is described as fine linen; the righteous acts of the saints—undoubtedly the result of rewards.

(3) In 2 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 4:5, rewards are associated with “that day” and with the Lord’s coming. Again, for the church this means the event of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

He further states...So the order of events will be (a) the rapture which includes our glorification or resurrection bodies, (b) exaltation into the heavens with the Lord, (c) examination before the *Bema*, and (d) compensation or rewards.

The Positive Aspects of the Bema

(1) To evaluate the quality of every believer’s work whether it is good or bad, i.e., acceptable and thus worthy of rewards, or unacceptable, to be rejected and unworthy of rewards. Actually an evaluation is going on every day by the Lord (Rev. 2-3).

(2) To destroy and remove unacceptable production portrayed in the symbols of wood, hay, and stubble. All sinful deeds, thoughts, and motives, as well as all good deeds done in the energy of the flesh will be consumed like wood, hay, and stubble before a fire because they are unworthy of reward. Why? This will be answered as we consider the basis on which rewards are given or lost.

(3) To reward the believer for all the good he or she has done as portrayed by the symbols of gold, silver, and precious stones, that which is valuable and can stand the test of fire without being consumed.

The Negative Aspects of The Bema

Here are a few negative aspects of this judgment, which are indicative to the believer experiencing loss.

(1) The loss of rewards (1 Corinthians 3:15). The phrase “he shall suffer loss” would be better expressed as, “the reward shall be forfeited.”

(2) The disqualification mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:27 means disqualified from rewards, not loss of salvation.

(3) The “recompense” or the “receive back” (KJV) of II Corinthians 5:10 refers to receive back what is one’s own as though it were given and then taken away.

(4) 1 John 2:28. This verse undoubtedly refers to the *Bema* and shows there will be both boldness as a result of abiding, and shame before the Lord as a result of failing to abide.

I see it as an examination of how well we abide in Christ while on earth. How well did we walk in the Spirit, revealing God's love and grace to others? Did our lights shine or did they dim and eventually burn out?

Theologians tell us that the "Bema Seat" experience will happen immediately after the rapture. I think it will be a glorious time of fellowship with other believers and great joy to be in the presence of Jesus. Yes, there will be loss of rewards because they were not motivated by the Spirit but rather done in the flesh. Wood, Hay & Stubble that will burn away, characterizes these deeds done in the flesh.

The final Judgment will be the "Great White Throne Judgment." It is reserved for all people who have rejected God's call to salvation. Every person who has lived upon the planet earth and has refused to accept God's way to redemption from sin will face their creator and be judged.

Many that thought they were safe will be shocked. Jesus, as recorded in Mathew 7:23 will say to them, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." I believe these to be all the religions of the world. But also, many who were called Christian but were members of a church and not truly "Born Again." Verses 21 & 22 tell the story. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? This is religion without the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. These are also they that will go through the tribulation and still not believe.

The concept of a great white throne comes from Revelation 20:11-15, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead, which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead, which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire".

Note that there is a, "Book of Life" filled with the names of the redeemed. If your name is not there, you can put it there now, before it's too late by asking Jesus to save your soul and committing yourself to Him.

Another point is that the dead, both great & small are all there. That's famous and nobodies. The text seems to suggest that all mankind including the redeemed are there but it is important to see that the verse says, "The Dead". All the folks that are living are listed in the Book of Life and are enjoying eternal bliss.

I know what you are going to say, "Why then is the Book of Life" at this judgment? I believe it is there as a final condemnation. It's to prove that they did not receive God's plan of salvation.

Guess who is sitting on this great white throne? "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him". (John 5:22-23) "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." (Romans 2:16) You guessed it. It is none other than Jesus. He would know if your name is in His book, right?

The Greatness of this Throne is not in the size of it, nor is it the number of the multitude who stands convicted before it, but in the greatness of the Judge who presides over it--the Lord Jesus. The white color is representative of His holiness and purity, and of how fitting it is that He should judge mankind.

Until Next Time

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