

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The Crucial Issues in Eschatology

- The eternal soul of every human being.
- The temporary separation at death of the material and immaterial parts of man.
- The present existence of a literal heaven and hell.
- The immediate passing of the soul at death into either heaven or hell.
- The consciousness of all the dead.
- The literal, bodily return of Jesus Christ.
- The physical resurrection of every human being.
- The future judgment of every human being.
- The eternal, conscious existence of every human being either in the lake of fire or the new heavens and the new earth.

A Biblical *Ordo Eschatos*



Two Resurrections

- Dan. 12:2 – "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.
- John 5:29— ... will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.
- Acts 24:15—there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Two Resurrections

- 1) The Resurrection of the Righteous
 - Christ & a few OT saints in 1st century (1 Cor. 15)
 - OT saints at the Second Coming (Dan. 12:2, 13).
 - Tribulation Martyrs; at the Second Coming (Rev. 20:4).
- 2) The Resurrection of the Wicked
 - All unbelieving dead at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:5, 12-13)
- The rapture & resurrection of the church?
 - Pre-tribulation—a separate resurrection for the church
 - Mid-tribulation—a separate resurrection for the church
 - Post-tribulation—resurrected along with OT saints and Tribulation martyrs.

God's Judgment

- Ps. 9:7— the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment.
- Ps. 96:13— Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.
- Eccl. 3:17— I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.
- Eccl. 12:14— For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.
- Acts 17:31— because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Future Judgments

- Judgment of the Nations (sheep & goats; Matt. 25:31-46); end of the Tribulation at the return of Christ
- Believers (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10); no later than during the millennium
- Unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15); end of the millennium

The Judge

- John 5:22— "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,
- John 5:27— and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man.
- Acts 17:31— because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."
- Cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1

The Timing

- 1) After the Rapture
- 2) At a General Judgment after the 2nd Coming
- 3) During the Millennium
- 4) At the Great White Throne at the end of the Millennium
- Arguments for before the 2nd Coming (i.e., in heaven during the 7-year Tribulation on earth):
 - a) Rev. 4:10 – saints already have their crowns before the tribulation; implies they have already been judged and received their rewards.
 - b) Rev. 19:6 – the saints are clothed in their righteous acts; presumably Christ has already judged them to be so.
 - c) Rev. 19:11-14 – saints return with Christ as an army; implies their rank has already been determined by Christ.
 - Cf. Luke 14:14— and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The Judged

- Christian Leaders
 - 1 Cor. 3:9-15
 - 1 Pet. 5:4— And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- All Believers
 - 1 Cor. 4:5— Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.
 - 2 Cor. 5:9-10—we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The Judgment

- Greek: *bēma*
- An elevated platform in ancient cities
 - victorious athletes received their crown
 - legal decisions were made
- 12x in the NT

Bema in the NT

- Matt. 27:19 & John 19:13 refer to Pilate's judgment seat
- Acts 12:21—refers to Herod's throne or judgment seat.
- Acts 18:12, 16f—the one in Corinth.
- Acts 25:6, 10, 17 – Paul before the judgment seat of Festus.
- Only 2x of God's judgment seat:
 - Rom. 14:10— we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
 - 2 Cor. 5:10— For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Three illustrations

- 1) Steward or house manager (1 Cor. 4:1ff)
- 2) Building contractor (1 Cor. 3:10-15)
- 3) An athlete competing in the games (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 5:10)

The Criteria

- We will not be judged based on:
 - Anything prior to our conversion (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Heb. 11)
 - Any sin
 - Rom. 8:1— Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - Heb. 10:17— "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."

The Criteria

- We will be judged based on:
 - a) Our works

Good Works?

- Westminster Confession: We cannot, by our best works, merit pardon of sin, or eternal life, at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom by them, we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because, as they are good, they proceed from His Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

Good Works?

- Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreprouvable in God's sight; but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

The Criteria

- We will be judged based on:
 - Our works
 - 1 Cor. 3:11-15
 - 1 Cor. 4:1-4
 - 2 Cor. 5:10

Our Works

- Faithfulness
- Decisions about our Christian liberty
 - Rom. 14:10— But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
- How we treat those Christ has commissioned as leaders.
 - Matt. 10:41— "He who receives a prophet in *the* name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Our Works

- Even the smallest act done in Christ's name.
 - Matt. 10:42— whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

The Criteria

- We will be judged based on:
 - Our works
 - Our words
 - Jam. 3:1—Let us not become many teachers, my brethren, know that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.
 - Our motives
 - 1 Cor. 4:5— Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts.

The Outcome

- Suffer loss (1 Cor. 3:15)
- Receive rewards (1 Cor. 3:14)
 - 1 Cor. 3:14— If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.
 - Cf. 1 Cor. 3:8— each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

The Rewards

- **a)** Spiritual gifts or crowns
 - Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8)
 - Crown of life (Jam. 1:12)
 - Crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4)
 - Crown of rejoicing (1 Th. 2:19)
- **b)** Future potential for service
 - Rev. 22:3—his bond-servants will serve Him.
 - Matt. 25:19-23

The Rewards

- **c)** Divine praise
 - 1 Cor. 4:5— each man's praise will come to him from God.
 - 2 Cor. 10:18— For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.
 - Matt. 25:21, 23 – "well done, good and faithful slave."

The Motivation

- Be faithful in our service here (Matt. 25:19-23).
- Do good and be loving toward all, even your enemies (Matt. 6:35).
- Fulfill the necessary responsibilities of this life as to Christ (Col. 3:22-24)
- Discipline your body (1 Cor. 9:27).

The Motivation

- Carefully discriminate to ensure that your fellowship is only with those who embrace the truth (2 John 8).
 - Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.
- Make it your daily ambition to please Him (2 Cor. 5:8-9)
- Live in expectancy of His coming (Rev. 22:12)