

The Judgments in the Bible

Before we look at the judgments listed in the Bible, we need to first look at what Scripture says about God/Jesus as our judge.¹ Our God is a God of justice, as the psalmist says, “*A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom*” (Psalm 45:6). It is the Lord Jesus Himself who is the Judge of all the earth: “*The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son*” (John 5:22). (Remember, Jesus alone is worthy to open the scroll in Revelation 5:5.)²

The church ***used to*** talk about God as judge and the horrors of hell until more recent years. Then the church went silent on these topics because the culture of our day wants to hear that God is love, not that He will judge us. But for us to ignore the idea that God is a judge would be a huge error because Scripture does not do that.

God Is a Judge

God has no problem at all calling Himself a judge. This is illustrated throughout the entire Bible. The first example is found in Genesis 2 where God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden. First of all, God loved us enough to create us.

God then put up a stop sign. The *stop sign* was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God verbally said, “*Stop! Do not touch this, do not eat of it, because on the day that you do, you will surely die.*” God was talking about both physical and spiritual death.

In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ignored God’s stop sign and what He had asked them to not do. God came to them after they sinned and asked, “*What have you done, Adam?*” Adam responded with excuses. What is interesting about God’s question is that God knew their secret sin.

They thought they could hide from God, and He would not know what they had done. Genesis 2 shows **God’s love**. Genesis 3 demonstrates **His omniscience**. God knew what they had done, but He asked them a question to motivate them to admit their guilt. In Matthew 6:6, Jesus was teaching about God the Father and said that He “*sees what is done in secret.*” The message is that neither you nor I can do anything that God does not see; we cannot hide what we have done from God. So, Genesis 3 reveals that we cannot hide our sin and guilt from God.

Next, Genesis 3 reveals that God is holy because He then judged them. He had put up that stop sign, “*Do not do this,*” and they went ahead and did it anyway. **So God demonstrates that He is trustworthy.** Can you imagine what it would have been like if God had told them stop and they had disobeyed anyway? *Then what if God had said that He really did not mean stop? That would have revealed God is a liar or that we could not trust Him. That would have revealed that God is not holy and just.*

Genesis 3 reveals that God called both of them to accountability. He immediately demonstrated many of His characteristics. God’s attributes were suddenly on display for all to see. When they ate of the fruit of that tree, they brought physical and spiritual condemnation on themselves. **They became sinners and were headed for the Lake of Fire.**

Then Scripture reveals again that God is love. Love is demonstrated all through the catastrophe because in chapter 3 and verse 15, He promised Adam and Eve and all of us a future Savior. God refers to Him as “*the seed of the woman.*” **God also judged Satan and Adam and Eve. Why? Because they sinned. God has told us that there is a divine principle at work that we reap what we sow.**

Do you know what God did? Watch this: the word “*judge*” is never used in chapter 2 or 3.

However, the illustration of God as judge is there because He judged the snake, the devil, the woman, and the man. There was a consequence for their behavior. Genesis 3 illustrates the fact that **God is a judge.**

Before we go to the New Testament, [there are] four principles in the Old Testament that crystallize the truth that God is judge.

Explicit Statement — God Is a Just Judge

God is the just judge. In Genesis 18:25 there is a discussion that occurred before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. This verse gives us the second illustration of God as judge, and explicitly states that **God is the Judge.**

Abraham was pleading with God because he was concerned about Lot living in Sodom and Gomorrah. He did not want Lot destroyed. Verse 25 says that Abraham said:

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” Genesis 18:25 (NASB)

Abraham believed that God is a just God. This judge is just: you cannot bribe or manipulate this judge. This judge does not see politicians and the wealthy in a different way than the poor and the powerless. Abraham said that God is the **“Judge.”**

In the book of Genesis, not only do we have an illustration that God is a judge, but also an explicit statement that He is a judge. It is wonderful to read here that God is a judge of all the earth – not part of the earth, not some individuals, and not the people who do not have power or wealth. **He is the judge over all the earth.**

The message is simple: **God is judge.** It is illustrated from Genesis through Malachi. It is illustrated significantly in the major and minor prophets. The prophets hammer the issue again and again that man is wicked. **Unless there is repentance, they are going to be judged.** When they were judged and repented, then the cycle only repeated again. We see it repeated over and over in the Old Testament.

God Is a Holy Judge

The second principle is that God is holy. The prophet Habakkuk was pleading with God. He was struggling with the issue of how God could use another nation that is more evil to judge a nation that is less evil.

Your eyes [God’s eyes] are too pure to approve evil . . . **Habakkuk 1:13** (NASB)

He was correct. God is holy. He is too pure to approve evil. So, the first principle is that God is just. The second principle is that God is holy. In reality, those two attributes go right together. If you do not have one, you do not have the other.

God Does Not Like to Punish

The third principle is that **God does not like to punish people.** Some of us might think that God is just eager to pounce on us with punishment, but He is not. This verse gives us a whole different perspective of our God:

For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men. **Lamentations 3:33** (NASB)

What this says is that God does not willingly cause us pain, nor cause us suffering. God is not eager to cause you suffering. This verse is saying that when God does afflict us, **it is not because He is eager to do it; it is because He must.**

It is because of our sin: **He has to put a stop to it. He is trying to rescue us.** He is not eager to do it. What we have done is we have pushed Him into a corner where He finally has to do something because we are not responding on our own as we should.

The message is repeated again a little differently, where this principle is “screaming” that God loves us. He is not eager to squash us like a bug.

For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies [declares the Lord GOD]. Therefore, repent and live. Ezekiel 18:32 (NASB)

Now is that not really clear? He would rather that we repent and live. He has no pleasure in the death of anyone. In the Psalms there is one death that He does enjoy: it is the death of His godly ones because then we are with Him. **Again, that proclaims that God love us.**

God Must Punish Sin

The fourth principle of God as judge is an important one that you might miss. This passage deals with the rebellion that will occur after the Millennial kingdom. The events in this passage in Revelation 20:7 follow the Millennial kingdom.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

Revelation 20:7-8 (NASB)

Verse 7 says that after the Millennial kingdom is completed, God will allow Satan to be released. If you look at the first part of the chapter, you will find that Satan will be bound for a thousand years. If you look at both the minor and major prophets, the message is that during the Millennial kingdom there is no war. There is peace. There is no suffering and no disease. In fact, we are told that a child playing near the hole of a cobra will not be bitten (Isaiah 11:8). The wolf will lie down with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6). They do not bite or eat one another, and there is no violence.

The Millennial kingdom will be fabulous, like a utopia! It is what everyone hopes for, wishes for, wants and desires. Do you know what happens after the Millennial kingdom, after everyone has had this wonderful experience? **The unbelievers will rebel against God!** Now why would they do that?! God will have just given them this glorious experience. So why would they rebel against God?

And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. Revelation 20:9 (NASB)

They will come against God and there are no armies this time. There is just fire from heaven that comes down and destroys them all.

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10 (NASB)

So what does this tell us about God as judge? Simply this: **He must judge because men are intransigent, rebellious sinners. Men will not obey God. We are so evil, so wicked that God must punish us when we refuse to stop sinning.** In Genesis 8:21, God said,

The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth. Genesis 8:21 (NASB)

That is how God characterizes our heart. We are evil. Even after the Millennial kingdom, man will rebel. **So God must judge.**

Jesus as Our Judge

There are four principles in the New Testament.

*For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. **John 5:22-23** (NASB)*

Here Jesus said that He will be the judge.

Believers Do Not Come into Judgment

[Jesus said,] *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” **John 5:24** (NASB)*

Jesus said the one who believes in Him will not experience death but will experience eternal life. He will not come into judgment.

Verses 22, 23, and 24 reveal that **Jesus will be our judge**. Do you see what the Scripture keeps describing? **God is a judge. So Jesus, who is God, is a judge.** When is the last time you heard anyone teach that Jesus is a judge? It is a topic that you rarely hear. But Jesus did not have a problem at all talking about Himself as being our judge. **Jesus is a judge.** Those who believe in Him will have eternal life and will not be sent to hell. Jesus said it.

*It is appointed for every person to die once, and **after that comes the judgment.*** Hebrews 9:27

*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, **to render to every man according to what he has done.*** Revelation 22:12 (NASB)

*And He [Jesus] ordered us [said Peter] to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that **this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.*** Acts 10:42 (NASB)

Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. Acts 10:43 (NASB)

So there is **one way to escape that judgment**, and **that is by putting your faith in Christ.**

In John 5:24, note the last part of that verse. Jesus says,

“... has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”
John 5:24 (NASB)

The Greek work that is translated as “passed” is in the perfect tense. It is a verb. **The perfect tense refers to something that occurred in the past and has ongoing action. In other words, the idea is that believers have passed out of death into life. It has already occurred. It is completed action. It is done.**

Ephesians 2:6 says that believers are already sitting in heaven. Romans 8:28 says that believers have been glorified already. That is in the **aorist tense, which refers to a completed action.**

It is a **powerful statement by Jesus**. He said that if we believe in Him, we do not have to worry. We have passed from death. We are not going to die. Then he said that we have life. It is an incredible reassurance!

*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, **when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.*** John 5:25-27 (NASB)

Jesus is repeating the idea that **He is going to be the one who is our judge**. Verse 28 adds,

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice. John 5:28 (NASB)

Here is a list of significant judgments in their likely chronological sequence.³

Judgments that Have Already Occurred⁴

The judgment of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14–24). God banished the first couple from the Garden of Eden for violating His clear command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This judgment affected all of creation (Genesis 3:17–18; Romans 8:20–22).

The judgment of the antediluvian world (Genesis 7:17–24). God sent a worldwide flood in judgment of mankind’s sin in Noah’s time. The flood destroyed all of mankind and the animal world, except for Noah and his family, whose faith led them to obey God’s command to build the ark.

The judgment at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:5–9). Noah’s post-flood descendants remained in one location in defiance of God’s command, so God confused their language, causing them to disperse over the earth.

The judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for the rampant wickedness that was taking place in those cities (Genesis 18:20; Ezekiel 16:49-50; Jude 1:7).

The judgment of Egypt and their gods (Exodus 7—12). The ten plagues against Egypt at the time of the exodus were “mighty acts of judgment” (Exodus 7:4) against a stubborn, cruel king and an idolatrous people and their gods (Exodus 12:12).

The judgment of believers’ sins (Isaiah 53:4–8). **Jesus took this judgment upon Himself by His crucifixion and death.** “He suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). Because our sin was judged at the cross, “**There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**” (Romans 8:1). It was also at the cross that God pronounced judgment on the unbelieving world and on the enemy of our souls, Satan. As Jesus said shortly before His arrest, “**Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out**” (John 12:31).

Judgments Occurring Now in the Church Age

Self-evaluation (1 Corinthians 11:28). Believers practice self-examination, prayerfully and honestly assessing their own spiritual condition. The church helps in this endeavor to purify the Body of Christ (Matthew 18:15–17). Self-judgment requires each believer to be spiritually discerning, with a goal of being more like Christ (Ephesians 4:21–23).

Divine discipline (Hebrews 12:5–11). As a father lovingly corrects his children, so the Lord disciplines His own; that is, He brings His followers to a place of repentance and restoration when they sin. In so doing, He makes a distinction between us and the world: “*When we are judged in this*

way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32). Whom Christ loves, He chastens (Revelation 3:19).

Judgments to Occur in the Future

The judgments of the tribulation period (Revelation 6—16). These terrible judgments are pictured as seven seals opened, seven trumpets blown, and seven bowls poured out. God’s judgment against the wicked will leave no doubt as to His wrath against sin. Besides punishing sin, these judgments will have the effect of bringing the nation of Israel to repentance.

The sheep and goat judgment/the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46) Takes place immediately after the return of Jesus.

Matthew 25:31-45 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸ When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹ Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. ⁴¹ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³ I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. ⁴⁴ Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵ Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. ⁴⁶ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

Do you see what Jesus was doing? Jesus was describing the fact that **He is the judge**, and [when He comes back] there will be a judgment called the Sheep and Goat Judgment.⁵

Some have said the Sheep and Goat Judgment occurs immediately at Jesus’s Second Coming; others believe it occurs at the Great White Throne Judgment. This difference of opinion occurs depending on one’s view of the end times held by dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists (amillennialists and postmillennialists). Non-dispensationalists (amillennialists and postmillennialists) say Matthew 25:31-46 is the Great White Throne Judgment. But there are several reasons why this cannot be true.⁶

Yes, the sheep and goat judgment occurs on earth just before the 1,000 year reign of Christ.

Many Bible scholars believe that Daniel 12:12 indicates that there is a 75-day period between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium, and that’s when the judgments occur. I have no wisdom on this and haven’t studied it out enough to even have an opinion. Also, it is

believed by many that the judgment of unbelievers at the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats will not be their actual trial, but instead it will be like an initial arraignment to show that there is evidence to hold them until their trial when all unbelievers appear before the Great White Throne Judgment. [Note: We do not have Scripture that clearly delineates if the Bema is the first or the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats.]

Judgment of believers from the Tribulation who died during the Tribulation. There is no passage that discusses that judgment, but these believers will be judged at a separate judgment. [Note: Some believe this would also take place during the 75 days before the Millennium begins.] We saw that some of those who died were martyred and will be chosen to rule with Christ in the Millennium.

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The judgment seat of Christ/the Bema Seat judgment.

The Bema Seat Judgment introduces the place where believers are going to be judged.

2Corinthians 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment (bema) 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...*

Romans 14:10 *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment (bema) seat* of Christ.*⁸

*(Greek #968. **βῆμα bema**, bay´-ma; a step, a rostrum, i.e. a tribunal: — judgment-seat, set (foot) on, throne.) (The *Bema Seat judgment* is more like appearing before a *reward platform*.) Paul is telling us in verse 10 the bema seat is a reward ceremony for believers. The bema seat in Paul's day was a platform on which the Olympic athletes would stand **to receive a reward** if they had been successful in their Olympic event. (The Olympic games in the time of the apostles included boxing matches, field events, javelin throwing, and chariot racing, to name a few.) The winners ended up standing on the *bema* to receive a reward. The reward was a wreath. We often think of a wreath like a crown. Today we give our Olympic athletes either a gold, silver, or bronze medal. Paul is telling us here that we will receive rewards. We will learn there are different kinds of rewards. When we say Bema Seat judgment, it is important to realize we are it is a place where there will be **rewards** for believers.⁹

Every believer will be at the Bema Seat **of Christ**. This is **the Bema Seat of Christ**. Every one of us will stand before Christ someday. We are going to be recompensed according to what we have done for Him.¹⁰

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the focus is not condemnation for sin, because believers stand justified by faith in Christ's finished atonement (Romans 8:1), but rather an assessment of faithfulness and motives in Christian service. Selfish works or those done with wrong motives will be burned up (the "wood, hay, and stubble" of 1 Corinthians 3:11-14).

1Corinthians 3:11-15 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Hebrews 6.10 *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

Works of lasting value to the Lord will survive (the “gold, silver, and precious stones”). Rewards, which the Bible calls “crowns” (Revelation 3:11, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12) will be given by the One who is “not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him” (Hebrews 6:10).¹¹ These rewards are not meant to foster pride but rather serve as evidence of Christ’s work in and through believers.

1Corinthians 15.10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

Recognizing that God is both just and gracious, believers can anticipate this future event as an occasion of accountability and celebration.

1Corinthians 3:15 clarifies that a believer may “suffer loss” of reward if their works prove worthless, yet they themselves “will be saved.” This demonstrates that the purpose of this judgment is to test the quality of each person’s earthly life, including deeds, words, and intentions, rather than to threaten one’s salvation.

[This is] the judgment [you] **want to be a part of.**¹²

2Corinthians 5:1-8 *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: ³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁵ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, **who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.** ⁶ Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) ⁸ We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

When he said, given unto us the earnest of the Spirit, **He is talking about believers.** ...Remember that those who come to faith were given the Holy Spirit as a pledge as a promise?

Ephesians 1:14 [speaking of the Holy Spirit of promise...] *Which is the earnest (down payment!) of our inheritance (what He died to give us as His own!) until the redemption of the purchased possession (He **paid the price**, and He is coming to **regain possession of us!**) , unto the praise of his glory.*

Paul describes here what we really want.

2Corinthians 5:9-10 *Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, **we may be accepted of him.** ¹⁰ 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.*

Paul’s message was that if you are truly [follow Christ], your heart’s desire is to please Him. You are *making efforts and attempts to reach the goal* of pleasing Him. **It is the mark of a believer. True believers want to please Jesus Christ.**¹³

There are several criterion Jesus explicitly told us in the Word of God that relate to the things He will be looking for in us:

- **Motives of the Heart:** Scripture repeatedly underscores the importance of heartfelt obedience. 1 Corinthians 4:5 reminds that the Lord “will bring to light what is hidden in darkness,” highlighting that genuine devotion takes precedence over merely external acts.
- **Faithful Stewardship:** Believers are entrusted with spiritual gifts, resources, and responsibilities (Romans 12:6-8). The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 illustrates the importance of diligence and fruitful investment of what God has given.
- **Love and Compassion:** 1 Corinthians 13 underscores that even miraculous works, if devoid of love, carry no eternal weight. Believers are called to express love through service, reflecting Christ’s own example.

Knowing about the Bema Seat Judgment has several practical implications for believers:

1. Holiness and Service: Awareness of this forthcoming evaluation encourages a life of integrity, love, and commitment to good works.

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

2. Joyful Expectation: Rather than fear, the anticipation of Christ’s judgment seat brings hope, comfort, and motivation for believers who view it as a culmination of a life lived for God’s glory.

1Corinthians 15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

3. Eternal Perspective: Understanding that earthly achievements have eternal impact shapes priorities. For instance, historical and geological evidences across the biblical lands show how temporary empires and monuments fade, yet Scripture teaches that faithful investment in God’s kingdom has lasting value.¹⁴

Rewards: Five Crowns For All Believers

The New Testament describes five crowns that every believer will receive.

1. The Crown of Exultation

Paul refers to people as being his joy or crown of exultation. He refers to them as being like a crown of joy. He refers to this crown as being his crown of joy.

1Thessalonians 2:19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or **crown of rejoicing**? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?²⁰ For ye are our glory and joy.*

Philippians 4:1 *Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, **my joy and crown**, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*

2. The Imperishable Crown

This crown refers to the fact every [true] believer will **persevere in the faith**.

1Corinthians 9.25 *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. (#862. ἀφθαρτος aphthartos, ...**undecaying (in essence or continuance): — not corruptible, immortal.**)*

3. The Crown of Righteousness

For those who have seriously suffered in this life, this crown of righteousness refers to the fact that when a believer finally arrives in heaven, he or she will be completely righteous – *both positionally and practically*, because of the righteousness of Christ.

2Timothy 4:7-8 *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

1Corinthians 1.30 *But of him are ye **in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:***

4. The Crown of Life

This crown refers to the gift of salvation.

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the **crown of life**, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

Revelation 2:10 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give **thee a crown of life**.*

5. The Crown of Glory

This crown indicates that every believer will have some sense of glory in heaven. We will have been saved by God's gift of grace through faith in Christ and have the righteousness of Jesus Christ our God.

1Peter 5:4 *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a **crown of glory** that fadeth not away.*

The previous two sections describe blessings for every believer. But the Crown of Glory is about rewards for individual believers.

Hebrews 6.10 *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

The promise that we are given is that **God will not forget what each individual believer has done for others**. The implication of the promise is that God will reward faithful believers.

Daniel 12:3 is an often-overlooked description of what believers will look like in heaven.

Daniel 12.3 *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

The verse is describing every believer, every righteous person, as shining in heaven. We will glow like the expanse of heaven. Then we are told that only those believers (not every believer) who has led many to become righteous will shine like the stars. What does “*lead the many to righteousness*” mean? **It refers to those believers who shared the gospel about Jesus and tried to help people become believers in Jesus Christ.** We cannot make anyone become a believer, but we can certainly plant the seed and water the seed. **It is these believers who will shine like the stars—like the sun.** This reveals that there will be degrees of rewards in heaven. Some believers will shine brighter than others. Now try casting that reward to the ground! This is not something on your head—you are going to be like the stars!¹⁵

Let me just summarize the rewards by saying that **all five crowns describe some aspect of eternal life**.

- Believers will experience joy now and in heaven (the Crown of Exultation).
- We will be [seen through the righteousness of] Christ. That is the Crown of Righteousness.
- The Crown of Life is another term for eternal life in heaven with our God, and
- the Imperishable Crown reveals that we will never die. So, the two crowns (Crown of Life and the Imperishable Crown) speak of our eternal existence in heaven.
- Finally, the Crown of Glory describes what we will look like and reflect about Christ (Daniel 12:3).

Here is a question for you today: Are you looking for a reward? Did you know that there is a reason to work for Christ? Did you know that there is a reason to be faithful, to have the right motives, to

serve Him eagerly? Why else would God tell us about these things in Scripture? **The answer is He wanted to motivate us.** He wants us to understand that there will be a reward ceremony in heaven someday. He does not want us to be surprised when you get to heaven, and have you say, "You never told me!" Why did He do that? **He loves us and He wants to encourage us to have rewards.**

We have a wonderful Savior who has forgiven us and given us eternal life. Someday He is going to give us rewards. For further study see Endnote ¹⁶ for links to *Bema Seat Judgment, Rewards God Gives Believers on Earth and in Heaven, and Rewards and God's Criteria for Rewarding Every Believer.*

The judgment of angels.

1 Corinthians 6:2 *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*

Paul says that Christians will judge angels. We aren't exactly sure what this means, but the angels facing judgment would have to be the fallen angels. It seems that Satan's hordes of demons will be judged by the redeemed ones of the Lamb. Some of these demons are already imprisoned in darkness and awaiting judgment, due to their leaving their proper dwelling place.

Jude 6 *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

Antichrist and False Prophet Judgment¹⁷

There is another judgment which is for the beast and the false prophet.

Daniel 7:10-12 *A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. ¹¹ I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. ¹² As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.*

Revelation 19:20-21 *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

Judgment of Satan and Demons¹⁸

Revelation 20.10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Do you remember there was a rebellion and then fire came down and consumed them? The passage said that the devil and the demons were thrown into the lake of fire and joined the false prophet and the beast.

Great White Throne Judgment¹⁹

[Note: Because it is not clear when those living in the Millennial who are written in the Book of Life are judged, some Bible scholars believe that possibly the Millennial believers who are written in the

Book of Life will also be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment. Although most think that judgment is for unbelievers only. However, Revelation 20:15 says, “*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*” That verse could mean that church age believers will be present at this judgment as witnesses. He suggested that it could mean that Millennial believers might be judged at this judgment.]²⁰ Although I am giving you this as an *unsubstantiated hypothesis* as to when the Millennium people found in the Book of Life are to be judged, it seems to me that God has it all under control without mixing up the order of things. After all, He made the constellations, and they are very predictable and orderly. Perhaps He just didn’t let us know when, or during the Millennium He has arranged something else and not told us.

This final judgment of unbelievers for their sins occurs at the end of the Millennium, before the destruction of the current heavens and earth and the creation of the new heaven and earth. At this judgment, **unbelievers from all the ages are judged for their sins and consigned to the lake of fire.** We study this in our Revelation Chapter 20 Bible Study.

In Job 8:3, Bildad, one of Job’s friends, asks, “*Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?*” The answer, of course, is “**no.**” “**He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just**” (Deuteronomy 32:4), and **God’s judgments will make His perfection shine forth in all its glory.**

The Great White Throne Judgment is the one that **none of us want to be a part of.** It is described in Revelation 20. It is principally stated to be for the non-Christians or unbelievers.

Revelation 20:11-12a *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.* ¹² *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...;*

It speaks of the dead and the great. The Greek word for “great” is **megas**. The word for “small” is **mikros**. The word **micron** refers to something **very small**, and **megas** refers to something **very big**. So God is saying that it will not matter whether you were an unimportant or an important person on the earth during your lifetime. It will not matter who you were or from where you came.

He said, “*And I saw the dead, the great and the small*”—the **really big and the really small persons**—“*standing before the throne.*”

Revelation 20:12b-13 *...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.* ¹³ *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.*

That is, the unbelievers who were in hell will now be standing before the Great White Throne Judgment, getting ready to hear the justification for their punishment. Hell will be waiting to receive them for eternity. [Note: and possibly the Millenium converts written in the Book of Life.]

So will unbelievers be evaluated? **According to their deeds.** *That is the message.*

Revelation 20:14-15 *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.* ¹⁵ *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Verse 15 is a summary statement. It makes the point that if you are not a Christian, that is where you are going. **That is where you will spend eternity. If you are not in the Book of Life, you are going to the lake of fire. I do not want to be part of that judgment.**

Conclusion²¹

The Bible tells us specifically about three coming judgments: the Bema, the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats, and the Great White Throne Judgment. Other judgments are not explained as to when they will occur or the details of the judgment (though the judgment of Old Testament believers is alluded to in Daniel 12:3, but without any specificity). We see that the judgment of unbelievers will be postponed until after the Millennium (the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15).

Why aren't these other judgments of believers explained? I don't know. Evidently God has given us enough information about the eschatological judgments of believers in what we are told about the Bema and the sheep and goats. Maybe He feels that's enough information for us to know. However, every believer who lived during or before the Tribulation will be judged before the Millennium begins.

Which judgment do you want to be a part of? I hope the answer is very simple. Jesus tells us how to escape the Great White Throne Judgment reserved seemingly for unbelievers.

John 5.24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.***

John 8.24 *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for **if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.***

John 17.8 ⁸ *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and **they have believed that thou didst send me.***

That is, He is God. The statement "*I am He*" refers to the fact that **He was and is the I Am**.

We must believe that **He is deity; He is God**. The gospel says that He died on a cross; He shed His blood so you and I could have our sins forgiven. He came up out of the grave as proof that He was the perfect, sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. **By faith we then accept Him**. One of the Holy Spirit's tasks in this world is to convict the world of coming judgment.

John 16:8-11 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me; ¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; ¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

When a person truly understands his sin, he will acknowledge his guilty position before a Holy God. The surety of judgment should cause the sinner to turn to the Savior and cast himself on the mercy of God in Christ...²²

Scripture also talks about **repentance**. You have to **seriously be repentant** because in Matthew 13, Jesus talks about wanting to be saved just as you would want or desire a great pearl—you have to really want it. **You have to want your life to be changed**. That is all part of true belief—saving faith. If you really believe that He is God, He is holy, He is just, and you are a sinner who needs your sins forgiven, then you have **true belief**. **The proof will be your transformed life**.

Do you know why Jesus came to die for us? He came to forgive us of our sins. [Do you know why He came to forgive us of our sins? So that He can have a restored relationship with you, because sin had separated us from Him. Do you know why He came to destroy **the sin** that separates you from Him? So that for eternity we can live in relationship with Him without being separated by sin.]

1Corinthians 1.10 *Who **delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;...***

I hope that you believe in Christ, that you are trusting Him for the forgiveness of your sins, and are looking forward to the day you will be with Him.²³

¹ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-the-judgments.html>

³

<https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-the-judgments.html>

⁵ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

⁶ First, if the non-dispensationalists are correct that the sheep and goat judgment occurs at the Great White Throne judgment, then everyone should be sent to the lake of fire, according to Revelation 20:11-15. Even the sheep should be sent into eternal punishment since everyone who stands before God at the Great White judgment goes to eternal punishment or the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:5-6, 14-15). But this cannot be true since earlier in Revelation 20:4-6 the Holy Spirit has told us that those who are resurrected earlier – the first resurrection – will not be subject to the “second death.” There are two different resurrections and two different judgments in Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15.

Second, in Matthew 25:31 Jesus sits on a glorious throne and in Revelation 20:11 Jesus sits on a great white throne, which is a throne of judgment. The first throne, the glorious throne, is a time of victory and the second is a sober time. Finally, the sheep and goat judgment is for those who are living (Matthew 25:31). In Revelation 20:4-15, there are two resurrections – for dead people. At the end of Revelation 19:20-2, we find that living persons who received the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image will be immediately judged. This is the time of the Sheep and Goat judgment will occur.

<https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/when-and-where-does-the-goat-and-sheep-judgment-occur/>

⁷ <https://faithalone.org/blog/when-will-non-church-age-believers-be-judged/>

⁸ <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-the-judgments.html>

⁹ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

¹⁰ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/gods-criteria-for-rewarding-christians/>

¹¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-the-judgments.html>

¹² <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

¹³ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

¹⁴ https://biblehub.com/q/what_is_the_judgment_seat_of_christ.htm

¹⁵ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/rewards-that-god-gives-christians-on-earth-and-in-heaven/>

¹⁶ *Bema Seat Judgment and Rewards:* <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/gods-criteria-for-rewarding-christians/>

Rewards God Gives Believers on Earth and in Heaven: <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/rewards-that-god-gives-christians-on-earth-and-in-heaven/>

God's Criteria for Rewarding Every Believer: <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/gods-criteria-for-rewarding-christians/>

¹⁷ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

¹⁸ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

¹⁹ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>

²⁰ Zane Hodges, cited in <https://faithalone.org/blog/when-will-non-church-age-believers-be-judged/>

²¹ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/> and <https://faithalone.org/blog/when-will-non-church-age-believers-be-judged/>

²² <https://www.gotquestions.org/all-the-judgments.html>

²³ <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-studies/beam-seat-judgment/bema-seat-judgment-for-christians/>