



“Every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

The Coming Judgments

Truth: Every person will face God in judgment.

Cobb’s “Confession of Faith”: Article XIX

Text: I Corinthians 3:9-15; Matthew 25:31-33; Revelation 20:11, 12

“We believe that there will be a judgment of rewards for the righteous at Christ's coming to receive His saints. The wicked will be judged at the close of the millennial age” (Cobb's Baptist Church Manual, pages 85, 86).

One of our Christian hymns states, “Judgment is coming, all will be there.” It is the solemn recognition of a truth stated once and again in Holy Scripture.

The Bible says, “*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27). That is an appointment every person will keep (Acts 17:31).

There is no way to escape God's judgment. The wise course is to prepare for that day according to instructions given in the Bible.

I. JUDGMENTS OF MANY KINDS

The mention of judgment may cause one to think of all people in all generations gathering at one time before God to find out whether they are saved or lost. Not so, as the following review will show.

A. Temporal judgments on sin have been common through all human history (Genesis 3:1-24; 6:1-8, 22; 19:24, 25; I Samuel 15:26).

B. Judgment of the penitent believer's sins in Christ occurs at the time of conversion (Galatians 3:13; I Timothy 5:24). No condemnation for sin awaits him after that.

C. Judgment of the believer's works by Christ occurs at the

judgment seat of Christ when the Lord returns in the air (II Corinthians 5:10; I Corinthians 3:12-15).

D. Judgment of the nations will occur when Jesus returns to earth to reign (Matthew 25:31-46). It will determine which nations exist as nations during the millennial reign.

E. Judgment of unbelievers will occur at the close of the millennial period and the end of time (Revelation 20:11-15).

II. JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS

At the judgment seat of Christ He will determine rewards for faithful service by Christians in this world. It is described in I Corinthians 3:9-15.

A. Time — Christ will sit upon His judgment seat when He returns in the air to catch up the saints. *"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works"* (Matthew 16:27). The appeal to Christian service is based in part on the truth that Jesus *"shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom"* (II Timothy 4:1).

B. Nature — The Greek term for "judgment seat" is *bema*. It refers to the place where rewards are given out. It is not used to describe the court where a criminal is convicted and sentenced. Therefore we understand it to refer to the judgment of the saved in view of the rewards they will receive. It is not used in the Bible to refer to judgment of the unsaved. The judgment seat of Christ is set to reward faithful service.

C. Persons — Jesus will be the judge upon the judgment seat. The Father *"hath committed all judgment unto the Son"* (John 5:22). God has already set the day when He will judge through the one whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus (Acts 17:31). Yes, Jesus is the judge.

Believers will be there to be judged and rewarded according to their works. They are the "we" of II Corinthians 5:10, which reads, *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* *"Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12).

D. Purpose — Christ will not sit upon the judgment seat to determine who is lost and who is saved. Only saints will appear there to be judged. It will be a judgment of works, and works do not bring salvation (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Salvation is determined in this life, not at the judgment (John 5:24). As death finds a man so shall he be at judgment and all eternity.

The judgment seat of Christ is to bring believers into harmony so *"they*

shall see eye to eye” (Isaiah 52:8).

It is to determine rewards for faithful service: *“Verily there is a reward for the righteous”* (Psalm 58:11). *“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”* (II Corinthians 5:9, 10). It is a foolish man who *“layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”* (Luke 12:21). Works will be passed through the fire of divine examination. *“If any man's work abide. . . , he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”* (I Corinthians 3:14, 15).

At the judgment seat Christ will honor faithful service: *“Then shall every man have praise of God”* (I Corinthians 4:5). What an occasion of *“exceeding joy”* that will be (Jude 24).

The rewards at the judgment seat will vindicate God's call to sacrificial service. Christians have missed out on much of the pleasure of sin in this world, but they will be more than repaid when rewards are given (Mark 10:28-30).

At the judgment seat Christ will determine each believer's place in His millennial kingdom. Matthew 24:45-51 tells of a ruler rewarding his servants. Jesus said of the faithful servant, *“He shall make him ruler over all his goods”* (verse 47). Matthew 25:14-29 reports how a master said to a faithful servant, *“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord”* (verse 23). Our position then will be determined by our service now. *“If so be that we suffer with him, . . . we may be also glorified together”* (Romans 8:17). *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him”* (II Timothy 2:12).

III. JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS

The unsaved will be judged before the great white throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15. It will have nothing to do with determining whether a person is saved or lost. It is a judgment designed to administer punishment.

A. Certainty — The Bible says that God will judge the wicked. That is a part of the divine appointment (Hebrews 9:27) set for the whole world (Acts 17:31). Jesus said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48).

Justice demands that evil be punished. Conscience expects judgment to

be executed. Reason requires that sin get its just due. Divine sovereignty guarantees judgment will come. *“Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's”* (Romans 14:8).

B. Nature — Consider the name of this judgment. It is *“great”* in view of the majesty of Him who judges and the number who are judged. It is *“white”* because of the purity of the verdict issued forth by a holy God. It is a *“throne”* in view of the sovereign power of Him who sits on it, from whose verdict there is no appeal.

The judgment issued from the great white throne will be right (Romans 2:2, 5), just (James 2:12), and eternal (Hebrews 6:2). There will be no appeal or opportunity to argue the evidence. Perfect justice will issue forth.

C. Time — Revelation 20 indicates two resurrections and two judgments which relate to two classes of people. There is a *“first resurrection”* of which it is said, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”* (Revelation 20:6). That is the resurrection of the saved. Then there is the statement, *“The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished”* (Revelation 20:5). That must refer to the unsaved. Therefore, there will be one thousand years between the resurrection and the judgment of the saved and the unsaved. The great white throne judgment will come at the close of the millennial age as that of the judgment seat of Christ came at the beginning of that period.

D. Subjects — Only *“the rest of the dead”* will appear before the great white throne judgment. There is no need for the saints to appear there since they have already been judged before the judgment seat of Christ.

E. Judge — Jesus Christ will be the judge upon the great white throne, just as He was the judge upon the judgment seat. God has announced that He will judge the whole world by Jesus Christ, and that includes the saved and unsaved (Acts 17:31). *“It is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead”* (Acts 10:42). *“God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ”* (Romans 2:16). Here is how the prophet Daniel described it, *“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit. . . . Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened”* (Daniel 7:9, 10). How dreadful to stand in His presence condemned!

F. Evidence — Human arguments will not be heard before the great white throne. Three points of evidence will be presented. The book of records of the life of every person will be opened (Revelation 20:12, 13;

Malachi 3:16). The Book of Life, with the names of all the redeemed therein, will be opened (Luke 10:20; Revelation 20:12; 21:27). The Bible will be opened that men may be judged by the words of Jesus (John 12:48). Against such evidence there will be no place for an argument in defense.

G. Purpose — The great white throne judgment will not be to determine the salvation of any person. That is settled in this life by one's accepting or rejecting Jesus (1 John 5:11-13). There is no change in destiny after death (Luke 16:19-31).

The judgment will determine degrees of punishment in hell (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:47, 48).

The judgment will consign sinners to their fate which is described as *“the lake of fire. . . the second death”* (Revelation 20:14, 15), *“where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”* (Mark 9:43-48), *“outer darkness”* where there is *“weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 8:12), and *“everlasting punishment”* (Matthew 25:46). *“The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night”* (Revelation 14:11). How tragic for anyone to go to hell when Jesus offers salvation.

God is a God of just judgment. He will certainly reward righteousness and punish evil. He has decreed a day for each person to stand before Him. You will be before the judgment seat for rewards or the great white throne for punishment. The difference is determined by your faith in Jesus Christ in this life. Trust Jesus today!

1. Why will God judge mankind?
2. What judgment is seen in daily life?
3. What judgment occurs at conversion to Christ?
4. What is the judgment of the nations?
5. What is the judgment seat of Christ?
6. How will the judgment there be different from the great white throne judgment?
7. Who will be judged at each of those?
8. How are they separated in time?
9. What rewards await the saved?
10. What punishment awaits the unsaved?