

**If born-again believers have been forgiven for their sins, why do they have to stand before God in judgment?**



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**Answer:** *Judgment Defined.* Most people assume that judgment equals condemnation, however, this is not necessarily so. The word, “judgment” simply means a time when an evaluation is being made. For instance, we use judgment to make sure we are safely crossing the street.

People have the mistaken notion that God has one judgment and that this one judgment is used to determine if you are “in” or “out” of Heaven. People also assume that God determines who is “in” or “out” based upon their actions (“works”). They assume that God will compare their good works with their bad, and if the good outweighs the bad then God will let them into heaven. The problem with this view is that it is not true.

***“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”*** (Titus 3:5)

***“For by grace you have been saved...9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*** (Eph 2:8-9)

*Number Of Judgments.* The Bible lists approximately 9 different judgments,<sup>1</sup> which take place at different times. (Below is a chart listing various judgments and an accompanying timeline to help you understand the timing of the judgments.)

*Basis And Outcome Of These Judgments.* The outcome of the judgments is determined by the nature of those being judged.

If an unbeliever is judged, he is judged because of the *nature* of sin which resides within him. The moment he was conceived in the womb, he inherited a sin nature (Rom 5:12). This sin nature causes him to reject God and His truth (that is why they are called unbelievers). In our age, this rejection is demonstrated by an unwillingness to confess one’s sin and an unwillingness to depend completely upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation (Jo 5:40). This sinful rebellion may be demonstrated in a number of ways.

Some people demonstrate their rebellion through living a religious and moral lifestyle, while denying their need of repentance of sin. In other words, they try to earn their salvation by their good works. This is in rebellion to God because God said that we cannot earn salvation (Rom 4:1-4; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7).

Other people may express their rebellion to God through more demonstrative means – by committing various sins (Rom 1:19-32; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

Therefore, sinners/unbelievers may be highly moral/religious people or they may be highly irreligious and hedonistic.

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<sup>1</sup> 8 are stated explicitly, 1 is inferred or assumed.

However, their judgment is based upon who they are – sinners. God is not waiting until some end times judgment to decide whether they get to go to heaven or not. God has already decided. All people who have not trusted Christ have already been charged as guilty. Their condemnation has already been determined.

***18 he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God... (John 3:18-19).***

God has already determined that all sinners are guilty (Rom 3:10, 21), and therefore, God has already condemned them (Rom 6:23). The final judgment for the unbeliever is merely the issuing of the “guilty” verdict, since God already knows they are guilty. Final judgment for the unbeliever is a time when the sentence (punishment) is declared.

***11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, ... 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is [the] [Book] of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books...15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:11-15)***

***9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9-11)***

The above verse shows the difference between unbelievers (sinners) and believers (saints). Unbelievers demonstrate various sinful “fruit” in their lives and the sentence has already been determined (“***will not inherit the kingdom of God***”).

However, Paul speaking to the Corinthian *believers* said, “***such were some of you.***” The Corinthian believers were once like other sinners, *but a change occurred*. Paul said that they were “***washed***” (v. 11) and “***sanctified***” (set apart) and “***justified***” (declared righteous). These are things which *God* did for them. God *cleansed* them from their sin; God *set them apart* – they became His and no longer belong to the world; and God *declared them righteous* by transferring to them the righteousness of Christ.

In order for one to qualify for heaven, he must be cleansed, sanctified, and justified. This happens the moment someone trusts Christ as Saviour.

Believers have:

1. confessed their sin: “***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness***” (1 John 1:9);
2. received Christ as Saviour:
  - a. “***whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved***” (Rom 10:13);

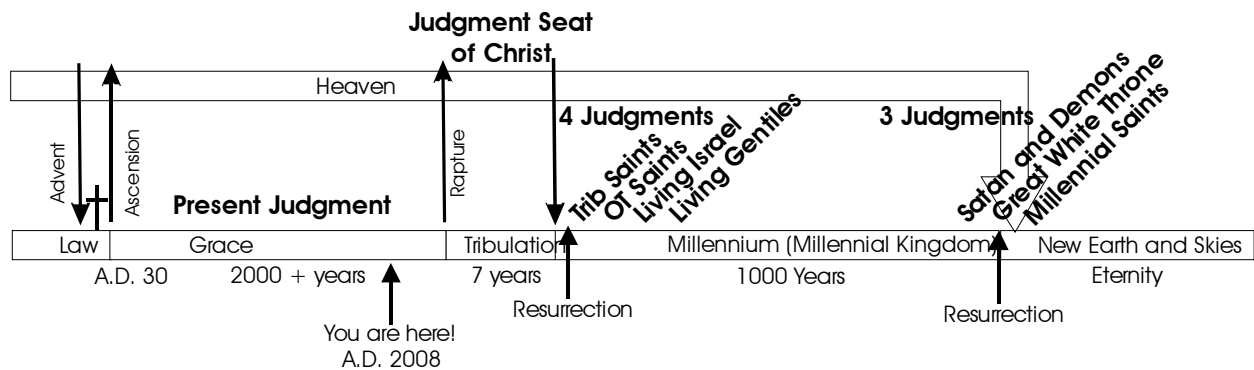
- b. ***“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life”*** (1 John 5:12);
- 3. and received forgiveness of sin: ***“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”*** (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14);
- 4. because Christ took the punishment of sin upon Himself: ***“you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”*** (1 Pet 1:18-21; 1 Jo 2:2).

When believers receive Christ as Saviour, God causes them to be born again, they receive a new nature (spiritual life; John 12-13; 3:1-6). All their sins are forgiven and they will not be condemned:

***There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...*** (Rom 8:1)

Since Christ has taken the penalty for believers’ sins upon Himself (past, present, future), there is no penalty to be paid.

## Judgments in the Bible



All believers in this age<sup>2</sup> will assemble for the Judgment Seat of Christ (see table). They will not be judged to find out if they are Christians – God knows who the true believers are and God will only take up true believers to the Judgment Seat of Christ. There is no question as to their eternal status. This judgment is not to determine if someone is “in” or “out” because God already knows – they have been born again, and therefore they are “in.” The Judgment Seat of Christ is a judgment by which God will assess and reward Christians for how they lived the Christian life.

***10 ...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*** (Rom 14:10-12)

***10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad...*** (2 Cor 5:10-11)

<sup>2</sup> from the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 30; Acts 2) to the Rapture

The Judgment Seat of Christ is *only for believers*. Paul said, “**we.**” When Paul, is writing, he is addressing only born-again believers who have received a new (spiritual birth) by the Holy Spirit in response to their faith and trust in Christ as Saviour.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is *for all believers* (Pentecost to Rapture). Paul said “**we shall all stand.**” Believers will be raptured up when Christ comes in the air for His own (1 Thess 4:16-17). Christ will remove all believers at the Rapture (none will be left).

The Judgment Seat of Christ is a personal judgment. Romans 14:12 says that each believer will give account of himself. God will be evaluating our responsibilities and whether we fulfilled them. We will not be able to blame other people for our failures.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is a time where God evaluates believers’ service. Paul said the believers will “**give an account**” (Rom 14:12) regarding the “**things done in the body...whether good or bad**” (2 Cor 5:11). Since the believers sin has already been paid for and removed (explained above), this judgment is for each believer’s faithfulness to responsibilities given. We should not look at the Judgment Seat of Christ as God judging our sins, but rather as God rewarding us for our lives. Yes, as the Scriptures say, we will have to give an account of our lives. Part of this is surely answering for the sins we committed (unfaithfulness). However, our sin will not be the focus, nor will condemnation be the result.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will be rewarded based upon how they faithfully served Christ (1 Cor 9:4-27; 2 Tim 2:5). Some of the things that God will look for are: how well we obeyed the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20); how victorious we were over sin (Rom 6:1-4); how obedient we were to His commands (Jo 15:14; 1 Jo 2:3); how well we controlled our tongue (Jam 3:1-9); and how we used our time and abilities to serve Him in the areas He is most concerned about (local church service, Eph 4:11-16).

The Bible speaks of believers receiving *crowns* for different things based on how faithfully they served Christ (1 Cor 9:4-27; 2 Tim 2:5;4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4; and Rev 2:10). These crowns are representative of the responsibility that each believer will have in the Millennial Kingdom (and eternity). If we serve God much now, we will be given many responsibilities in the future (Matt 19:28-30; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 22:3-5). If we do very little for God now, likewise our position and responsibilities will be small (1 Jo 3:3).

<b>9 Judgments in the Bible:</b>			
<b>Present Day</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Description</b>
Present Judgment	1 Cor 11:27-32; 1 Peter 4:16-18; 1 Cor 6:1-5	Believers	The believer is to evaluate himself for sin, and confess and forsake it. If he ignores his sin, God begins to “judge” through fatherly chastisement.
<b>Following The Rapture Of The Church</b>			
Judgment Seat Of Christ	1 Thess 4:16-17; 2 Cor 5:10-11	Believers	God evaluates believers based upon their faithfulness. Rewards have to do with Kingdom responsibilities.

<b>After The Tribulation Period</b>			
Judgment Of Resurrected OT Saints	Dan 12:3; Ez 20:35; Mal 3:16-17	Believers	To assess their faithfulness as believers and to establish Millennial Responsibilities
Judgment Of Resurrected Martyred Saints	Rev 20:4-6	Believers	To assess their faithfulness as believers and to establish Millennial Responsibilities
Judgment Of Living Israel	Ez 20:33-34, 37; Mal 3:1-6; Matt 25:1-13; 14-30; Rom 11:26	Believers and Unbelievers (some will believe the message of the Kingdom and will be saved, others will reject the message)	The Saved will enter the Kingdom and the Lost will be put to death.
Judgment Of Living Gentiles Nations (Sheep And Goat)	Joel 3:1-2; Matt 25:31, 32	Believers and Unbelievers (some will believe the message of the Kingdom and will be saved, others will reject the message)	The Saved (“sheep”) will enter the Kingdom and the Lost (“goats”) will be cast into Hell.
<b>After The Millennial Kingdom</b>			
Judgment of Satan and Demons	Rev 20:10; Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4; Matt 25:41	These may be two separate judgments	Final condemnation
Great White Throne	Rev 20:11-15; Dan 12:2; John 5:29b	All unbelievers will be resurrected from hell	Final condemnation
Judgment Of Millennial Saints	Inference or assumption	Believers	To receive glorified bodies and rewards