

# The Final Judgment



Will believers have to face the final judgment? What will it be like? What will be expected of us?

All these questions are in people's minds when they think about the end times and the final judgment. Throughout the Scripture, we see God's judgment on mankind poured out in many different ways. We see

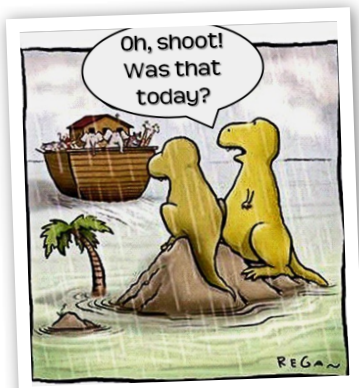


God's judgment in Noah's flood which cleansed the earth. We also see it in God's judgment on the people building the tower of Babel. One of the most vivid scenes in our mind is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, which displayed God's judgment in a horribly extreme way.

Yet, the Bible also says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die,

but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

If all mankind is to face judgment, we must explore the biblical evidence for this event, and understand what the focus and guidelines of this judgment will be.



# Who Will Be Judged?

The Bible has much to say about the coming Judgment. Most importantly, Jesus Christ will be the judge (2 Ti. 4:1; Acts 10:42; John 5:26-27). This means that the very one who was beaten and judged by humanity will be the one sitting in judgment of the world. Likewise, those who have trusted in Christ as their advocate, will find that the judge Himself will be the one who purchased their redemption.

## Unbelievers

Scripture is also clear that all unbeliever will be judged according to God's law. (Rom. 2:5-7; Luke 12:47-48). Every sin must receive a just punishment. Also, there will be degrees of punishment according to knowledge of God's law and the wickedness of ones' heart and life. (Luke 12:47)

## Believers

Believers will also be judged (Rom. 14:10, 12; 2 Cor. 5:10). However, the judgement of believers will be a judgment to evaluate and bestow various degrees of reward, therefore, believers should never fear eternal condemnation (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1). For believers, the day of judgment is where believers are rewarded and unbelievers punished.

## The books will be opened (Rev. 20:12-15)

"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.

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.

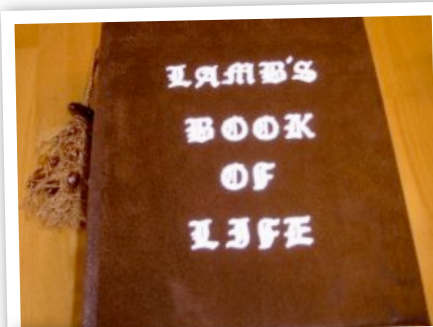
14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever

was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

**Notice** that the unbelievers (those not written in the book of life) are judged solely on their works. According to this, no man will enter heaven. Everyone who is judged solely by his works is cast into the lake of fire.

But those who's name has been recorded in the book of life and have received the salvation Jesus offers, will not be cast into the lake of fire. Their sins are remembered no more (Mic. 7:19, Ps 103:12; Heb. 8:12). Their good works are judged to assess the degree of reward they will receive in eternity.

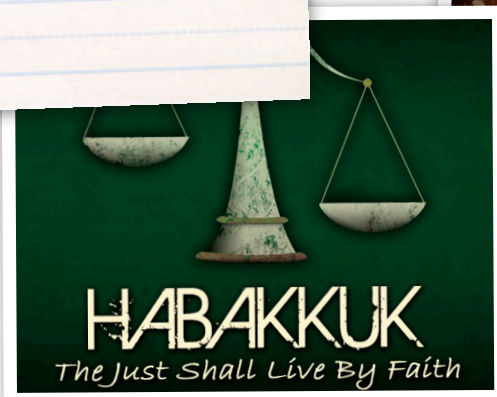
"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. 21:27







We need the doctrine of the final judgment, for without it there can be no justice in this life or the next.



How can the idea of a final judgment be a good thing?

1. It satisfies our inward sense of a need for justice in the world (Col. 3:22,25). Without judgment, there is no justice for those who have been victimized and preyed upon.

2. It enables us to forgive others freely (Rom. 12:19; 1 Pt. 2:22-23). Understanding that everyone will receive

justice allows us to let go of the idea that we need justice now.

3. It provides a motive for righteous living (Matt. 6:20). Knowing that judgment comes inspires us to do all we can for the Kingdom.

4. It provides a great motive for evangelism (Eze. 33:11; 2 Pt. 3:9). We must warn others of the coming judgment.

# The Doctrine of Hell

## Is there really a Hell?

Today, the idea of a place of eternal, conscious torment is often done away with. Many books have been written explaining that there is really no such place as Hell.

## “Conditional Immortality?”

Quite often, those who deny the doctrine of hell speak about “conditional immortality.” By this, they mean that God only gives immortality to believers and all non-believers are annihilated in the fires of hell. For them, there is no eternal punishment. Those who are cast into the lake of fire are destroyed and exist no more. In this view, those cast into hell are exterminated and are no longer aware.

Most of the time evidence for this view is cited from the many passages that speak of hell as “destruction” or “perishing.” Many claim that the term “destruction” must mean that the sinner no longer exists.

## Evidence for Hell

In Matthew 25, Jesus speaks of the judgment of the sheep and the goats. As the section closes Jesus says, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46).

Here, it is clear that punishment itself lasts forever. If those experiencing punishment are finally exterminated, then punishment does not last forever.

Likewise, Mark 9:43-44 says, “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life

maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Here we see that the fire of torment is never extinguished. This implies that there is an endless supply of fuel to keep the fire burning. This is why Jesus says, “their worm dieth not...” Jesus was comparing hell to the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna), where dead bodies and refuse were burned continually. In this place “worms” (probably maggots) continually fed on the bodies of the dead.

I once had a person argue with me about the doctrine of hell. When I brought up this verse, He said, “But it says the worm doesn’t die, not the person.” At this I could only marvel. I said, “So everything dies in the fire...except worms? What makes them special?”



## Eternal punishment doesn’t fit the crime!

Many say it doesn’t make sense to say that God would punish men for eternity for crimes they committed in

this life. Shouldn’t the punishment fit the crime?

This is a very common argument. However, there are two things that many don’t consider.

1. Do people stop sinning once they are in hell? This is a very important question. Many people think that, at death, a condemned person doesn’t sin anymore. However, there is no reason to believe that people in torment no longer sin in thought and actions. A continuous mindset that is rebellious to God constitutes sin. This is demonstrated in Luke 16:19-31. When the rich man is sent to hell and Lazarus is in Abraham’s bosom, the rich man calls out for a drop of water on his tongue, and he calls to have his brothers warned. There is no hint of repentance or sorrow for sin.

2. The value of the one sinned against determines the punishment. When a person tells a single lie to his children, what happens? Nothing, his children can’t punish him. What happens when someone tells a lie to their boss? They get fired. What about a lie to a judge in a court of law? That is called perjury and is punishable by imprisonment. If a person tells a single lie to the President, in some cases, this could be considered treason and is punishable by death. Why did the punishment change if the crime was a single lie in every instance? - It was because the authority of the one lied to was different. God’s authority is infinite and deserves an infinite punishment.

# Study Questions

1. Have you thought before that there will be a final judgment for believers?

2. How does the awareness of the fact that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ affect your life today?

3. What do you think it will feel like to have all your words and deed made public on the last day? Are you afraid? If so meditate on 1 John 4:16-18.

4. Think of some of your Christian friends in the church. How do you think you will feel when you watch them stand before Christ at the final judgment?

5. Does the thought of this future judgment affect the way you think of your fellowship with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ today?

6. Are you convinced that Scripture teaches that there will be eternal conscious punishment of the wicked?

7. Is there anyone who has wronged you in the past, and whom you have had difficulty forgiving? Does the doctrine of final judgment help you to be more able to forgive them?

8. How else does the doctrine of judgment affect our daily life?

