

Ministry of Grace

Judgments

Judgments mentioned in the Bible

Judgment (bema) Seat

Occurring immediately after the rapture, this is a judgment for Christians only. At the Judgment (Bema) Seat the works of the bride of Christ will be evaluated for the purpose of presenting crowns as rewards.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (**2 Corinthians 5:10**) [ESV]

But why do you judge your brother? Or also why do you despise your brother? For all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (**Romans 14:10**) [MKJV]

Sheep and Goat Judgment (Judgment of the Nations)

The judgment of the nations, or sheep and goat judgment, will occur at the end of the Great Tribulation. Those who have remained faithful to God, along with those who were martyred for their faith during the tribulation, and faithful Jews of all time will be ushered into the Millennial Kingdom here on the earth. Those who received the mark of the beast will be committed to eternal torment.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (**Matthew 25:31,32**) [ESV]

Great White Throne Judgment

This judgment is the one that occurs at the end of time as we know it. After the present heavens and earth have been destroyed, all the unsaved of all time will appear before their creator and will be judged according to their works as recorded in God's record books. Since none of these will be found in the Book of Life they will all be cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw **the dead**, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (**Revelation 20:11, 12**) [ESV]

This is a judgment of "the dead." Since believers have already passed from death to life, this is **not** a judgment of believers.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. (**John 5:24**) [ESV]

Ministry of Grace

Judgment (bema) Seat

What is it?

In both **Romans 14:10** and **2 Corinthians 5:10** the word translated “judgment seat” is the Greek word *bematos*, which literally means “an elevated step.” The *bematos* often had a seat upon it where a judgment or tribunal was held. In the 1st century A.D. a Bema Seat (*bematos*) was where the victor in a race or other contest was awarded a crown by a judge who sat on the Bema Seat. This crown is a “victor’s crown,” which is the Greek word *stephanos*, meaning “a wreath.”

Depending on which translation you have, **Romans 14:10** may be different from what we have here. Some translations have “the judgment seat of God.” This is the result of a variant reading of the texts that these were translated from. It doesn’t change the fact that this judgment is at a bema seat. At the bema seat, those who are present will be given awards, in the form of crowns, for the work they have done while on this earth.

Who appears before the Bema Seat?

For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (see **Ephesians 1:13, 14**)

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. (see **I Peter 1:7-9; Romans 4:12; Romans 6:4**) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (**2 Corinthians 5:1-10**)
[ESV]

Based on the highlighted portions of this passage, it is obvious that “we” and “us” do not refer to all mankind, but to saved Christians only. Hence, the “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” refers to Christians. This does not include the faithful believers (both Jews and Gentiles) who died before the Cross because nowhere does the Bible tell us that they were given the earnest (promise token) of the Spirit as we have. As we will see in the next section, the tribulation saints are not included in this group either. Hence, this is a judgment only of the Bride of Christ, the Church.

Jesus, himself appeared before a Bema seat judgment when he appeared before Pilate

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." So when Pilate

Ministry of Grace

heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment (*bematos*) seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. (**Joh 19:12, 13**) [ESV]

When does the Bema Seat Judgment occur?

The exact time of the Bema Seat Judgment is difficult to pin down. Based on the passage above from **2 Corinthians 5** it is clear that the Bema Seat Judgment happens after we have died. At the rapture all Christians will receive their glorified bodies, and it is most likely at that time that the Bema Seat Judgment will take place because according to **1 Thessalonians 4:17**, from that moment on we will forever be with the Lord.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (**1Thessalonians 4:7**) [NASB]

Also, in **1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20** Paul makes a reference to the crown of rejoicing at the time of Christ's returning for the Church. This seems to indicate that the crowns will be given as part of the events of the rapture.

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. (**1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20**) [ESV]

In **1 Thessalonians 3:13** we see Christ bringing his redeemed ones to the Father and we (the redeemed ones) have blameless hearts. On first seeing this verse we may take it as referring to the coming of Jesus to the earth. However, if you read it carefully you will see that it is "before our God and Father" that Jesus is coming with all his saints.

so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (**1 Thessalonians 3:13**) [ESV]

Thus, it appears that the Bema Seat Judgment happens immediately after the rapture and before we are presented to the Father by the Son.

What is judged at the Bema Seat?

Are we judged for our Works? – Yes!

According to **2 Corinthians 5:10**, it is the works of believers that are judged at the bema seat. We will receive what is due to us based on what we have done while in this body of flesh.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (**2 Corinthians 5:10**) [ESV]

In **1 Corinthians 3:8-15** Paul uses the metaphor of a building as he talks about the work that we have to do for Christ. We shall receive rewards for the works that have been done for Him. The works which we have done for ourselves will be burned-up.

He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone

Ministry of Grace

else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw -- each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

(1 Corinthians 3:8-15) [ESV]

According to this passage, the fire will “try” our works. This word is also sometimes translated as “test” or “judge.” It is the Greek word *dokimadzo*, which means “testing or proving a thing to find its worth or goodness.” It is the word that is used when referring to gold being refined, or proven, by fire. Hence, the judgment of the bema seat is for the purpose of finding good so that rewards can be given, **not** for the purpose of finding bad to be punished.

Also notice that as the fire “tries” our works, those that are worthless will simply be burned-up. There is no penalty or punishment for that, simply a loss of what was done because it is worthless in God’s eyes.

Are we judged for our Sins? – No!

Our sins will not be judged because they were paid for at the cross, and we have already been given the righteousness of Christ. We can never be judged for our sins because our sins have been paid for. The Lord Jesus Christ became sin for us (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (**2 Corinthians 5:21**) [ESV]

We owed a debt we couldn't pay. He paid a debt He didn't owe. Christ, who knew no sin, took upon Himself all of our sins in order that we, who knew no righteousness, might become the righteousness of God in Christ.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, (**Romans 3:21, 22**) [ESV]

According to **Psalms 103**, our sins have already been completely removed from us, as far as the east is from the west, that’s how far He has removed our transgressions from us.

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (**Psalms 103:8-12**) [NIV]

And -- according to **1 John 3:2** we will be like Him when we see him; hence we will have His righteousness, which means we will no longer be subject to judgment.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (**1 John 3:2**) [ESV]

Ministry of Grace

Are we judged for our obedience? – No!

Believers are being judged for our obedience daily. When we misbehave and disobey the commands he has given us, he chastens us. This is not to punish us, but to teach us and to help us to grow. This chastening is for our own good, to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (**Hebrews 12:9-11**) [ESV]

Our obedience will not be judged at the bema seat. Our obedience is being judged (and we are chastened when we disobey) now!

What rewards are given?

Since the bema seat judgment is for the purpose of finding good in our works done in this physical body, it follows that at the bema seat judgment is when and where we will be awarded our crowns. In each of the following scripture passages, the word translated “crown” is a form of the Greek word *stephanos*. This is from the root *stephō*, which means “to twine” or “to wreath.” It is often referred to as a “victor’s crown.” The other Greek word that is translated as “crown” in the Bible is *diadēma*, which is often referred to as a “ruler’s crown” or a “crown of power.” The crowns in the following verses are all *stephanos*. The crown rewards for Christians are:

The Incorruptible Crown, or the victor’s crown

Do you not know that those running in a race all run, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain. And everyone who strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Then those truly that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. (**1Corinthians 9:24, 25**) [MKJV]

The Crown of Life, for those who are faithful to the end.

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (**Revelation 2:10**) [ESV]

The Crown of Glory, or the overseer’s crown

shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (**1Peter 5:2-4**) [ESV]

Note: This crown will be awarded “when the Chief Shepherd appears.”

The Crown of Righteousness, for those who love His appearing

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (**2 Timothy 4:7,8**) [ESV]

Ministry of Grace

The Crown of Rejoicing, or the soul winner's crown

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (**1 Thessalonians 2:19**) [NKJV]

It is not specified anywhere whether everyone will receive a crown or whether some will receive multiple crowns. The point is that we must be obediently working for our Lord and Master while on this earth if we want to receive any crown.

Sheep and Goat Judgment

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, (**Joel 3:1,2**) [ESV]

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (**Revelation 20:1-5**) [ESV]

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?'

Ministry of Grace

Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (**Matthew 25:31-46**) [ESV]

What is it:

This is perhaps the most misunderstood of all the judgments described in the Bible. Many people confuse this with the Great White Throne Judgment which takes place at the end of time. This judgment takes place at the end of the Tribulation "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him" - **Matthew 25:31**) where believers (sheep) and non-believers (goats) who have survived the Tribulation are separated one from another. These being judged are "the nations" according to **Joel 3:1, 2**. Notice that the one doing the judging here is "the King" and the believers will be ushered into the Millennial Kingdom whereas the unbelievers will be sent directly to the Lake of Fire.

There are three distinct groups of people spoken of at this judgment. They are the sheep, the goats, and "my brothers." The sheep are referred to as "the righteous." (**Matthew 25:37**) Keep in mind that in **Romans 3:10** we are told, "None is righteous, no, not one." The only way for a person to become righteous is to be declared righteous by God as a result of faith; therefore, the sheep must be believers. Since the Bema Seat Judgment has already occurred for Christians, the righteous here must include those who have become believers during the Tribulation, as well as all Old Testament saints. This means that the Old Testament saints must be resurrected before the Sheep and Goat Judgment. This is described in Daniel 12:1, 2:

*At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. (this is the war in heaven at mid-trib) And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. (this is the Great Tribulation – the 2nd half of Daniel's 70th week) But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (these are the believing survivors of the Great Tribulation) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, (the Old Testament believers) and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Old Testament non-believers) (**Dan 12:1**)* [ESV]

The Goats are referred to as "cursed ones" (**Matthew 25:41**) and are sent directly to the Lake of Fire that was originally prepared for Satan and his angels. The third group is referred to as "my brothers" who are the believers who have survived the Tribulation.

When does it occur?

Based on **Matthew 25:31** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him" and **Revelation 20:1-5** quoted above, this judgment takes place at the end of the Tribulation right after the campaign of Armageddon and the battle at the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The period of the Great Tribulation (the second three and a half years of Daniel's 70th week) is referred to as a time, times, and half a time (**Daniel 7:25; Daniel 12:7; Revelation 12:14**), as 42 months (**Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5**) and as 1260 days (**Revelation 11:3, Revelation 12:6**). All of these equate to the same period of time (assuming the prophetic 30 day month and the prophetic 360 day year.)

But Daniel also refers to 1290 days from the cessation of the daily sacrifice (middle of the tribulation) and he refers to a period of 1335 days from the same day.

And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, **there shall be 1,290 days**. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the **1,335**

Ministry of Grace

days. But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days. (**Dan 12:11, 12**) [ESV]

What are these extra 30 days plus 45 days for? Perhaps for the Sheep and Goat Judgment (30 days) and the setting-up of the Kingdom (45 days). We are not told for sure.

Where does it occur?

Again, we are not told specifically where this judgment will take place; however, it is alluded to in Joel's prophecy. In **Joel 3:2** it says:

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, (**Joel 3:1,2**) [ESV]

This is where what appears to be the final battle of the Tribulation will take place. This campaign apparently ends in the valley of Jehoshaphat. There is no place in Israel that is named "the Valley of Jehoshaphat," but many equate it with the Kidron Valley between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives. Jehoshaphat means, "Jehovah judges." For these reasons, many Biblical scholars believe it is the place that the Sheep and Goat Judgment will take place.

Who is judged?

This judgment is for those who have survived on earth during the seven year Tribulation and for the resurrected Old Testament saints. Those who have believed in God, have not taken the mark of the Beast, have sided with the Jews, and have cared for them, are the sheep. The sheep will also include all the Old Testament saints. The goats are those who have rejected God, sided with the Beast (anti-Christ) and the False Prophet, having taken the mark of the Beast.

What is judged?

According to the passage in **Matthew 25**, it is the works of the Old Testament saints and these tribulation survivors that are judged. Does this mean that people are saved during the tribulation based on works? No, no more so than we are saved by works during the church age. According to James in the second chapter of his letter, works are the result of faith, not the other way around.

During the second half of the tribulation, the period known as "The Great Tribulation," the Beast (Antichrist) will try to destroy the Jewish people once and for all. Those who are saved during the tribulation (called "saints" in the book of the Revelation) will protect and care for the Jews even at the peril of their own lives.

It is these works, based on a saving faith, that are specifically focused on during the Sheep and Goat Judgment.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

Ministry of Grace

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (**Matthew 25:34-40**) [ESV]

What rewards are given?

The reward for the faithful is entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. In verse 46 these are also given eternal life, but it may be that God is referring to eternal life after the Millennium just as we who are saved in the church age **have** eternal life, though it won't be realized until the end of our earthly life.

³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ⁴⁶And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life. (**Matthew 25:34, 46**)

What punishment is given?

The punishment for the unfaithful is everlasting torment in the lake of fire. It does not appear that they receive their sentence (being cast into the lake of fire) at this time, however. That will occur when they reappear before their God at the Great White Throne Judgment.

⁴¹Then he also shall say to those on the left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (**Matthew 25:41, 46**) [ESV]

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (**Revelation 20:4, 5**) [ESV]

Great White Throne Judgment

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (**Revelation 20:11-15**) [ESV]

When does it occur?

This is the judgment that occurs at the end of time. According to **Revelation 20:1**, heaven and earth fled away from the One sitting on the throne and there was found no place for them. If there was no place for them then they no longer exist. Hence, this is occurring at the end of the current heavens and earth (i.e. the end of time.)

There are more than 20 passages that talk about the Day of The Lord. When the prophets spoke of it, they represented it as a day of God's wrath, a day of woe, and a day to be feared. However, Peter tells us that in the Day of the Lord, the earth will be burned up.

Ministry of Grace

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (**2Peter 3:10**) [NKJV]

Thus we see that the term “the Day of the Lord” refers to the entire tribulation period and the millennium.

Where does it occur?

In **Revelation 21**, immediately after the Great White Throne judgment, John saw the new heaven and the new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. (**Revelation 21:1**) [ESV]

Since the old heaven and earth have disappeared and the new heaven and the new earth have not yet appeared, this must take place somewhere outside of space and time. It is often referred to as “The Throne Room of God.”

Who is judged?

And I saw **the dead**, great and small, standing before the throne (**Revelation 20:12**) [ESV]

A good question to start off with would be, “Who is not judged.?” Since all saved individuals have passed from death unto life (**John 5:24**), they are not among the “dead.” **Revelation 21:7, 8** says:

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, **the unbelieving**, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (**Revelation 21:7,8**) [NIV]

Those who are saved (the ones who overcome) will not experience the “Second death” according to **Revelation 2:11** and **Revelation 20:6**

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death. (**Revelation 2:11**) [NIV]

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. (**Revelation 20:6**) [ESV]

The unsaved, on the other hand, have no such assurance. In fact **Revelation 21:8** says they will experience the second death and be cast into the lake of fire.

But the cowardly, **the unbelieving**, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (**Revelation 21:8**) [ESV]

Those who are to appear before God’s Great White Throne are already dead. That does not just mean physically dead, because at this point in time (eternity) all have passed from this physical life. The expression used here refers to spiritually dead.

What is judged?

In a word, works! Do you see what **Revelation 20:12, 13** says?

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And **the dead were judged by what was**

Ministry of Grace

written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and **they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:12, 13)**

These are judged by the things written in the books (plural), according to their works. They are not judged according to their faith in Christ which is recorded in the Book (singular) of Life. Verse 13 reiterates the fact that they are judged according to their works.

What punishment is given?

All who appear at this judgment will all be judged by their deeds, that is, how well they measure up to God's standard of righteousness.

But we are all as the unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as a menstruation cloth. And we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. **(Isaiah 64:6)**
[MKJV]

And

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. **(Romans 3:10-12)** [ESV]

Finally, as a result of their inability to measure up to God's standard of righteousness, they will be cast into the lake of fire

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. **(Revelation 20:15)** [ESV]

On the surface it appears from this verse that perhaps not all are cast into the lake of fire. The grammatical construction of this sentence, however, is what is known as a "first class conditional" sentence in Greek grammar. It is a conditional statement that assumes that the first part of the statement (the protasis) is true, therefore the second part (the apodosis) is also true. For this reason, the "if" in this type of construction is sometimes translated as "since." Thus it would read, "**And since no one's name was found ...**" Since this is a judgment of the dead, no one has works of righteousness worth anything, and since none of the dead are found written in the book of life, all who appear at the Great White Throne Judgment will be cast into the lake of fire! **This is the second (and final) death!**

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.