

## Study 0028

### Scripture Text: Hebrews 6:2c; Matthew 25:31-46

We come now to the last of the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith: **The Doctrine of, or, Teaching about Eternal Judgment**. Eternal judgment is the judgment that will take place shortly after the resurrection, and the declarations thereof will be binding forever. Eternal judgment is a certainty, and not a myth, and will occur in two batches—one, at the end of the first resurrection (rapture), and the other, at the end of the final resurrection (after the one-thousand-year reign of peace). As the resurrections are distinct (one for believers in Christ, and the other for unbelievers); so also are the judgments that follow these resurrections. It is important to note that eternal judgment is not the kind in which a person will be defending himself with the help of a lawyer; for the matter will already have been settled and the evidence of guilt or otherwise is available for all to see (and they are irrefutable)!

Eternal judgment is not a judgment that will take place on earth below, but in heaven above. Earthly judgments take place on a daily basis, but eternal judgment will take place only shortly after each of the two resurrections—the first and final resurrections, respectively. Unfortunately, many people believe that eternal judgment is a myth, and that it can never happen, because, they propound that God is a good God, and cannot, in His goodness send anyone to hell. They fail to realize that we have good judges here on earth, and in their goodness, they sentence erring individuals to prison terms and even death, in some cases. The fact that justice is served by a judge is the confirmation that such a judge is good. Likewise, the confirmation of the goodness and justice of God is that those deserving of punishment in hell are sent there, for ever!

There are two distinct judgments that will take place in eternity, and they are different and distinct in form and content. One is the giving of rewards, and the other is the passing of sentence. The giving of rewards will take place shortly after the resurrection of those who died in Christ and the rapture of those still alive and serving Christ at the time of the rapture. It is known as, “*The Judgment Seat of Christ*”. The passing of sentence on the other hand, will take place shortly after the end of the one-thousand-year reign of peace (also called the Millennial Reign of Christ); when all those who died without Christ shall have been resurrected, and those who are alive at the Millennial Reign but who rejected Christ, shall all be gathered to stand before God, the Father, to receive their just sentences. This judgment is known as, “*The Great White Throne Judgment*”. We shall now consider these two judgments individually.

### The Judgment Seat of Christ

‘The Judgment Seat’ is a common expression of a tribunal, a trial hall, a place of judgment, or, in today’s language, a court room (**John 19:13; Acts 18:12-16; 25:6-12**). The judgment seat is the place where accusations are brought before a judge against a person, and the person gets to defend himself, after which sentence is passed as to the guilt or otherwise of the person being accused. In the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is the court room of Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ will sit as Judge and will judge believers in Christ who have been resurrected/raptured. His judgment will however, not be one of condemnation rather, it will be one of giving rewards for the things believers did while they were alive in the flesh (**Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10**). Everyone who appears here will give an account of the things he did, including the motive for his deeds/works. The thoughts of believers will also be judged, as will their actions,

and their words (**Matthew 12:36**). The mode of judgment will be fire, which shall test every man's work whether it be precious or perishable (**1 Corinthians 3:12-15**). What is significant about the Judgment Seat of Christ is that no one will be sent to hell. Even if a person has no rewards, the fact that he is standing before Christ will be his reward (having escaped as by fire).

For those who are believers in Christ, this is the time to ensure that we judge our motives for serving God; double check on our obedience to God, whether it be complete or incomplete; and, whether or not we are serving God in His power or in our own strength (**2 Corinthians 13:5**); for these, motive, complete obedience, and service in the power of God, will be the criteria for judging believers (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

### **The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)**

This is the final judgment, and it is markedly different from the judgment seat of Christ. Here, those to be judged are those who lived or died without Christ. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be the Judge. The judgment here will be eternal punishment for evil deeds while on earth, but essentially, for not believing in Christ (**John 3:16-21; Romans 8:1**). Those to be judged will be judged based on whether or not their names are written in the Book of Life and based on the things they did while on earth (**Revelation 20:12, 15**). Suffice to say that anyone who is not born again and who is not living for God will not have his name written in the Book of Life and will therefore be considered an evil person, and a candidate for the final judgment. The final judgment will be one in which the punishment which is to be served for ever, will be pronounced on all who appear before God. Those who are so sentenced will be thrown into the eternal fire of hell (**Matthew 18:8-9**), where their companions will be the devil and his fallen angels (**Matthew 25:41**). They will be thrown into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (**Matthew 25:30**), shame and everlasting contempt (**Daniel 12:2**). The final judgment is the commencement of the second death from which no one is ever going to be brought back (**Revelation 20:14-15**). The second death is eternal separation from God (**Matthew 25:41; Psalm 16:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10**).

Our knowledge of the final judgment should motivate those of us who have indeed escaped the terror of God's judgment (the born again and sanctified Christian) to:

- (a) Always be grateful to God for our salvation and deliverance from the judgment to come (**Romans 5:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10**);
- (b) Live in the fear of God (**Hebrews 10:31; 1 Peter 1:17**)
- (c) Intercede for the lost; and,
- (d) Warn men and women everywhere to repent and turn to God (**2 Corinthians 5:11; Romans 1:16-20**)

### **Conclusion**

Our studies on the foundational truth of the Christian faith, have shown that Christianity is not about becoming wealthy or having our every problem solved; rather, it is about God's rescue plan from the judgment to come, so that we should live soberly henceforth. Let us be reminded of the possibility of being sucked back into the moral decadence of this world if we are not circumspect in our walk with God (**Hebrews 6:4-6**). It is our prayer that, as many as have been saved by grace through faith, will walk worthy of the calling whereunto God has called them; will leave behind every filthiness of sin and worldliness; and, press on to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. By the grace of God, we pray that we shall all stand before the

Judgment Seat of Christ, and not before the Great White Throne Judgment. Let us also make up our minds to earnestly and urgently begin to speak to people about the true gospel which brings salvation; not the fake and watered-down gospel that is all over the place which does not lead anyone to salvation (**Romans 1:16**)!

In the course of our study, we did not mention the various kinds of rewards that those at the Judgment Seat of Christ will receive. This we shall do in our next study, God permitting.

### **EXERCISE**

Please answer true or false to the statements below:

1. Eternal judgment is what takes place in order to decide on who is to be resurrected, and who is not to be resurrected.
2. Eternal judgment can be for rewards, and it can be for punishment.
3. Eternal judgment is always about punishment.
4. Because God is altogether good and merciful, eternal judgment is the time when people will be cautioned, but none will be sent to hell.
5. The Judgment Seat of Christ is where those who refused Christ while they were alive will come face to face with Christ.
6. The Judgment Seat of Christ is where the fate of those going to heaven and those going to hell is decided.
7. Eternal judgment and the first and final resurrections are linked; one following after the other.
8. Everyone who appears before Christ gets a reward.
9. To get a reward, what is significant is the size of your giving, the size of your church, and the number of souls won by you.
10. One key element about The Great White Throne Judgment is whether or not you believed in Christ while you were alive.
11. Eternal judgment is a matter that concerns Pentecostals only, because not all churches believe in it, neither do they teach it.
12. If a Christian finds himself before The Great White Throne Judgment, it means that a mistake has been made, and he will be sent instead to the Judgment Seat of Christ.
13. The punishment to be meted out by God will range from short-term sentences of a few years, to long sentences of eternity.
14. Hell is a place for the devil and fallen angels, and so no person will be sent there; instead, people who are bad will be sent to purgatory where they can get a second chance.
15. The second death is the punishment for those condemned at The Great White Throne Judgment.
16. A person with a genuine reason for doing evil will be given another chance.
17. The teaching about eternal judgment should motivate the Christian to spread the true gospel of Christ.
18. The teaching about eternal judgment should motivate the Christian to always be thankful to God for rescuing him from the final judgment.
19. The teaching about eternal judgment should motivate the Christian to acquire wealth here on earth, so that he can use it to enjoy himself in heaven.
20. The teaching about eternal judgment should motivate the Christian to live soberly and honestly before God.