

## Question #19: What Is the Final Judgment?\*

### Introduction:

After the millennial reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth, a final “great white throne” judgment will take place (Rev. 20:11–15). This final judgment stands as the culmination of all previous judgments (for instance, the Flood of Gen. 6–8 or Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 19). It serves as the “day of wrath when God’s judgments are revealed” (Rom. 2:5) on which God will righteously judge the world through Christ (Acts 17:31).

### 1. What Happens at the Final Judgment?

- a. Jesus Christ will serve as the judge at the Final Judgment (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1; Matt 25:31–33)
  - i. The Father has given him this authority (John 5:27).
  - ii. This judgment will result in “reward” for Christ’s followers but destruction for the destroyers of the earth (Rev 11:18).
- b. The unbelievers will experience the wrath of God (Rom 2:8).
  - i. Unbelievers will be judged based on their works (Rev 20:12).
  - ii. There seems to be indication that unbelievers will experience degrees of punishment base on what they have done.
    - 1) Some will receive greater punishment (Luke 20:47).
    - 2) The level of knowledge one possesses may be taken into account (Luke 12:47–48).
  - iii. Believers will also give account for themselves before God (Rev 14:10–12).
    - 1) This judgment does not result in punishment or condemnation for believers (John 5:24; Rom 8:1).
    - 2) This judgment, then, should not produce fear in the believer but rather should serve as a source of encouragement to please God (2 Cor 5:9).

\* The material in this handout is a summary of chapter nineteen, “What Is the Final Judgment?” in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. by Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 129-33..

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- 3) Christ's sacrifice has atoned for our sins, so this judgment seems to be a time of recompense for service God has enabled us through Christ to accomplish (Phil 2:12–13) in our present position as believers (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:12–15).
  - 4) While there may be degrees of reward in heaven, the emphasis in Scripture is on the ultimate reward of being in God's presence and worshipping Him (Rev 4:10–11).
  - 5) Believers, then, are not in some sort of heavenly rewards' competition, but rather we are to encourage and edify one another on to greater service as we await this final day (Heb 10:24–25).
- iv. Angels will also partake in this final judgment, both demons (Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4) and good angels (1 Cor 6:3).

### 2. The Purpose of the Final Judgment

- a. Since God already knows the heart condition of both believers and unbelievers, the final judgment will serve as the ultimate occasion for God's glory to be demonstrated in both justice and mercy.
- b. The judgment will be completely fair.
  - i. God will judge each impartially according to one's deeds (1 Pet 1:17).
    - 1) Unbelievers fall short due to their sin (Rom 3:9–20).
    - 2) Believers stand dressed in Christ's righteousness (2 Cor 5:21; Rev 7).
  - ii. God will show no partiality (Rom 2:11).
  - iii. Ultimately, God will be glorified and believers vindicated as all God's judgments are true and just (Rev 19:1–2).

### 3. What about Hell?

- a. The Bible clearly portrays Hell as the final punishment for those who ultimately reject Jesus Christ.
  - i. While it was prepared for the devil and his angels, hell will also be filled with those who reject Christ (Matt 25:41).

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- ii. It is a place of torment (Luke 16:28).
  - iii. It will last for all eternity (Rev. 14:10–11; Matt 25:41).
- b. The believer should view hell with great solemnity and sadness.
- i. God takes no pleasure in destroying the wicked (Ezek 33:11).
  - ii. Yet, because his justice demands that he act righteously, he cannot let evil go unpunished. He must do something about it (Ps 92:15), and this seems to be the function of Hell.
4. Applications from the Final Judgment
- a. Everything that happens in this universe will be judged fairly at some point. Evil will receive its just punishment (Col 3:25).
  - b. Thus, believers should be willing to forgive because God will hold each action accountable and repay it according to His will (Rom 12:19).
    - i. We do not need to meet out punishment because God will see to it that either Christ's blood pays the penalty for the sin or the unbeliever for their rejection of Christ must pay for it in Hell.
    - ii. In acting in such a way, the believer follows the example of Christ (1 Pet 2:23).
  - c. The final judgment serves as motivation to focus on the eternal things of God rather than the material things of this age (Matt 6:20).
  - d. The final judgment should also motivate believers to witness of Christ's work as God desires that none should perish but rather all should come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9).

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