



Global Trial

Human courts seldom discover the whole truth. Judges and juries listen to the evidence and try to find the facts as best they can. But imagine a judgment in which everything comes out in the open. A judgment that lays bare every action, every motive, even every thought! That's the kind of judgment the Bible says that each of us will face when life is over. Here's what God's Word says, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . . So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10, 12).* The Bible adds, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). It's clear, then, that everyone—saints and sinners—will appear before God in the great Judgment Day. If that thought makes you fearful or uneasy, read on.

What the Bible says about the judgment

The Bible is clear that we will all face God's great Judgment Day. And what a day that will be! The Bible describes it: "I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away. . . . 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" (Revelation 20:11, 12).

This judgment will probe the very depths of each person's heart. Jesus said, " 'I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment' " (Matthew 12:36).

The Bible says that God "has appointed a day on which He will judge the world" (Acts 17:31). And we know that day is fast approaching. Soon God will open the books and judge each person's life record. In fact, the Bible is clear that the judgment has already begun in heaven! Revelation pictures an angel

calling out, “ ‘Fear [worship] God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come’ ” (Revelation 14:7).

When Jesus comes to earth again, He will bring His reward with Him (see Revelation 22:12). The saved will be given eternal life, and the wicked will be destroyed. If that is so, then obviously a decision—a judgment—must already have taken place before Jesus comes to determine who is saved and who is lost. This “investigative” phase of God’s great judgment is going on now in heaven in preparation for Jesus’ soon return to earth.

Why a judgment is necessary

But isn’t God a loving heavenly Father? Why does the Bible paint such a scary picture of Judgment Day, with God Himself examining each person’s life in excruciating detail? Why doesn’t God just forgive everyone and let us all into heaven?

In order to understand the need for a judgment, we have to understand that God is just as well as loving. It’s difficult, sometimes, for us to recognize that justice and love are two sides of the same coin. If my son is beating up my daughter, I’m not a loving father unless I do something to stop it. And that may involve administering justice to my son.

It’s the same with God. You see, someone has been beating up on God’s children. The Bible calls Satan a “roaring lion” going around seeking to devour us (see 1 Peter 5:8). He rebelled against God in heaven, and he tries to tempt each of us to join him in his fight against God.

In love, God has to meet Satan’s challenge. But doing so means that He must destroy sin and all those who insist on clinging to it. And that means looking into each person’s heart. In other words, God has to make a decision—a judgment—about each person. He loves every one of His children; He doesn’t want anyone to be lost (see 2 Peter 3:9). But in justice, as well as love, God must finally separate persistent sinners from those who love and serve Him. That’s why a judgment is necessary.

You don’t have to be afraid of God’s judgment

All this talk of judgment sounds scary, doesn’t it? It’s frightening to think about a judgment that examines every thought, every motive, every act we’ve ever done. We know that our lives haven’t been perfect. What chance do we have of coming through such a judgment without being condemned?

Here’s a comforting fact: Jesus Himself is your Judge in the judgment (see John 5:22). The One who will be your Judge is the same Jesus who loved you enough to die on the cross for you. The same Jesus who told the woman caught in adultery, “ ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more’ ” (John 8:11).

How to be prepared for the judgment

1. Repent of your sins and confess them to God. “ ‘Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ ” (Acts 3:19). The first step is to recognize our sins and repent—be sorry for them and turn away from them. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9).

2. Believe on Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Savior from sin. “ ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’ ” (John 3:16; see also Acts 16:31; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

3. Let Jesus work in you to live in harmony with His will. “We may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He [Jesus] is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). “By this we know that we know Him [Jesus], if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3). The proof that you have truly accepted the saving grace of Jesus is your willingness to let Him change your life to reflect His character. Jesus Himself said, “ ‘If you love Me, keep My commandments’ ” (John 14:15).

4. Trust Jesus. He says, “I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24, KJV). The apostle Paul puts it this way: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

God loves you!

It’s true that as a sinner, you deserve the sentence of death in the judgment. But Jesus has already died in your place. He has taken your sentence upon Himself and paid the penalty for your sins. If you accept what He has done for you and in faith claim Him as your Savior—if you will let Him live in you and reflect His character in your life—you can face the judgment without fear.