

In **Hebrews 6:1-2**, the writer of Hebrews says we need to understand and live in (six) foundations of the Christian faith before we can mature as a Christian.

In the modern Western churches, for the past 100 years or so, there has been a growing emphasis on the “God is Love” aspect of God’s character. While Scripture strongly affirms this, other aspects of God’s character are also stressed, in order that we come to understand in a balanced manner God **as He really is**.

As much as God is loving, He is also **just**. His judicious nature must also be understood. This balance was proclaimed through Moses (Exodus 34:6-7); while being loving, *He does not leave the guilty unpunished*. The same God is the God of the New Testament. Mercy and truth were revealed through Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14-18), but this never took away from God’s just nature.

A basic fact for every human being from every age and every place on Earth... **JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN!!** No one gets away with anything! **ALL** actions come up at the Great White Throne (Rev 20) and are properly, judiciously dealt with. When Habakkuk complained that people and politicians / rulers seemed to be getting away with all kinds of ungodly, unethical, and criminal activity, God reminded him that at the appropriate time, God **will** judge everything.

What does the author of Hebrews mean by the phrase, “eternal judgment”? In the Greek language, eternal = for ever, everlasting; and judgment = krima (our word *crime*); a decision (the function or the effect, for or against). We can see from this that the issue is about reckoning an appropriate ongoing response to actions previously committed.

**Read Matthew 25:31-46.**

In this passage Jesus describes two types of people who will face judgment – the goats and the sheep; describe their distinctive characteristics.

### **1. JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS / THE GOATS**

This takes place at the Great White Throne of God.

**Read Revelation 20:11-15.**

In verse 11, at the Great White Throne, those that are “dead” already are judged. These people are judged for each person was judged “according to what he had done”. The record of their actions has been kept in “books” (20:12) which are something like a “facts sheet” presented in a criminal court.

- a) What will everyone have to do according to the following verses?
  - a. Matthew 12:36
  - b. Hebrews 4:13

In the light of this impossibly perfect standard, God had to make an atonement provision in the sacrifice of His Son, otherwise **no one** would pass the judgment criteria (John 1:29 Heb 9:7).

- b) Why must there be a final judgement?
  - a. Ungodliness – read Jude 14-15 and 2 Peter 2:6-9.
  - b. Disobedience - read Romans 2:6-11 Jude 6 Hebrews 3:18
  - c. Unbelief – read John 3:18 Acts 4:12 John 5:24
  - d. Sin – read Romans 5:12 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

Following on from Jesus’ statement in Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:10 plainly states that **HELL (Gehenna) is REAL, ONGOING, and a place of TORTURE**. It was originally created as the final place of imprisonment and punishment for “the Devil and his angels”. Ungodly, rebellious people end up there with Satan after the Great White Throne judgment.

Note though that the separate issue of how God treats those who have “never known, never heard” the gospel is dealt with by Paul in Romans 2:9-16.

## ***2. JUDGEMENT OF BELIEVERS/ THE SHEEP***

The (béma) “Judgement Seat of Christ” awaits every believer. Read 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:8-12. We can categorize the judgment of believers into three types:

### **The Salvation Issue**

The First Judgment is **Past** - our Judgment as a sinner. When we accept the finished work of Christ as an atonement for our sins, we can never again come into judgment as a sinner. John 5 v 24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."* In Romans 8:1-2, Paul adds, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."*

Read 1 John 1:7-9. When we confess our sins, God cleanses us thoroughly, completely and permanently, not partially. Psalm 103:11-12 says *"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."*

### **The Discipline Issue**

The Second Judgment is **Present** - part of our sanctification, God’s loving discipline on us as His sons. According to the following verses why does God discipline us?

Hebrews 12:4-11.

1 Corinthians 11:32

Romans 6:4-7

### **The Placement Issue**

The Third Judgment is **Future** – our Judgment as a Servant of God. It’s this judgment that takes place at the Béma Seat of Christ. Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 5:10 *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad"*.

Who is Paul talking to? 2 Corinthians is addressed to *"the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints which are in all Achaia."* This is not a warning to the unsaved; this is a word addressed to believers. This judgment is for Christians, but it cannot and doesn’t deal with sin or salvation. The Béma is not a **judicial bench** where someone is condemned, it is a **reward seat**. It has nothing to do with the unbeliever’s rejection, but everything to do with the believer’s reward.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Paul teaches here that at the Bema Judgment Seat, our service will be revealed and rewarded. The loss we can suffer is a loss of rewards in heaven, not a loss of Salvation. Revelation 22:12 says *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."* Who was Christ talking to? He is talking to believers, His servants. Christ comes to fetch us, to separate us from the goats, to take us to His Judgment seat, where we will be rewarded.

Be careful to understand that our works **CANNOT** save us. Only belief and faith in Jesus Christ can. Does that mean our works are not important? Not at all. Our works on this earth will determine our rewards in the life hereafter.... where in the coming operating Kingdom of God we will find our place of function.

What do the following verses say about judgment? In each verse identify whom the judgement applies to and when.

1. Galatians 6:7
2. Ephesians 6:7-8
3. Colossians 3:23-25
4. James 2:12-13

**The Rewards for Believers**

There are five main rewards for believers— our inheritance in heaven. The Bible speaks of them as “crowns”. These are the privileges of service for the King of Kings.

1. **Incorruptible Crown** – read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
2. **Crown of Rejoicing** - the reward for witnessing for Christ. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. Paul was speaking here to the people that he had won over to Christ. It gives one great joy to win another over for Christ; so much so, that those we have won over will actually be our glory when Jesus comes back. We will receive a crown of rejoicing for the people we have led to Christ. It is perhaps the greatest reward anyone can receive.
3. **Crown of Glory** - the reward for being a good example. Read 1 Peter 5:2-4. Being shepherds of the flock of God means we need to be **doers** of the Word, being good examples to others – practicing what we preach! We need to make sure that those we lead to the Lord are disciplined properly. Leaders need to take care of those that God has entrusted to them.
4. **Crown of Life** – this is a reward for suffering for Christ. Read James 1:12.
5. **Crown of Righteousness** - for keeping your faith until the end. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

The rewards we will be given will be the responsibility that we are given in God's eternal kingdom, and it will **never** be changed, it is for ever – eternal! But, it is determined here, **on earth**. No wonder Paul stressed how hard he had laboured for His Lord....

Finally, read the following Scriptures and write down what you learn from them:

- a) 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12
- b) Jude 6
- c) Revelation 14:9-11
- d) Revelation 20:10
- e) Titus 2:11 - 3:7

So, it **IS** important what you do, how you live, how you give and serve. This will make an **eternal difference** to your situation within God’s coming Kingdom. Many of Jesus’ parables deal with this rather than salvation issues. This life is something like an apprenticeship; there is great incentive to apply ourselves wholeheartedly and skilfully – there are great rewards after the “graduation”! In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul likens this to the variation of glory between celestial bodies. So we must be careful how we live, how we build our heavenly rewards account as we serve our Lord....

What is the most important truth you have learned from this lesson?

Do you have any more comments or questions?

We are grateful for the material freely supplied by [Russ Pickett](#) and [Tony Wright](#) which is incorporated into this study.