

The Significance and Purpose of the Final Judgment

Purpose: The revealing of the power and glory of God who alone has the prerogative to judge. God will openly declare the final state of every person and he will dispense his judgment and reward in a way that confirms his righteousness. (See WCF 33:2)

Significance:

History is moving towards a goal.
That Day will reveal that salvation and eternal blessedness depend on a person's relationship to Jesus Christ.

The final judgment underscores a person's accountability for his or her own life.
It signals the final triumph of God and his redemptive work in history.

- Final conquest of all evil.
- Final revelation of the victory of the Lamb.
- Ultimate display of the glory of God, manifesting God's grace and justice.

The Timing and Number of Final Judgments

Dispensational View: (Typically various judgments)

- Believers at the time of the Rapture
- Israel at the end of the Tribulation
- The Gentile nations at the end of the Tribulation
- The unbelieving dead at the end of the Millennium (The Great White Throne)

Amillennial View: The day of judgment is one great day.

- At the end of this present age (2 Pet. 3:7; Matt. 13:40-43)
- At Christ's Second Coming (Matt. 25:31-32; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)
- Following the general resurrection (Rev. 20:12; John 5:28-29; 2 Tim. 4:1,8)

Who will be the Judge?

God (the Father) will judge the world through Jesus Christ
(1 Pet. 1:17; Rom. 14:10; John 5:22; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10)

The place of angels and saints—possibly participating somehow in this judgment.
(Matt. 13:41-43; 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2-3)

Who will be judged?

- Angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6)
- All human beings of all time (Matt. 25:32; Rom. 2:5-6; 3:6; Rev. 20:12-13)
- Including Believers (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 10:30; Rom. 14:10)
Yet clearly with no fear of condemnation or dread! (Rom. 8:1)

What will be judged?

All things done in this life (2 Cor. 5:10)

Actions (Matt. 25:35-40; Rev. 20:12; Eph. 6:8)

Words (Matt. 12:36)

Thoughts (1 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 2:16)

Will the sins of believers be revealed?

Yes, certainly before God, but as forgiven sins.

Before others? This is not clear. If so, without condemnation.

Notice the motivational nature of the scriptural teaching of giving an account before God.

(example: 2 Cor. 5:10)

What will be the standard for judgment?

The revealed will of God is the standard. Some have received more light, some less. All have received sufficient light to render them without excuse. Judgment will be based on the light we have received. (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12-16; Matt. 20:22; Luke 16:31)

There will be gradations of suffering in hell, but this is never set forth as a consolation. (Luke 12:47-48)

The all-important factor in the final judgment is a person's relationship to Jesus Christ.

(John 3:18,36; 5:24; Rom. 8:1)

If it is only through faith in Christ that a person escapes condemnation and enters into eternal blessedness, why does the Bible teach that judgment will be according to works?

(Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 20:12; 22:12)

The answer rests in the intimate connection between faith and works. Salvation is never earned or merited by good works. It is solely by grace through faith. However, true and saving faith always produces the genuine evidence of good works. Thus, at the final judgment the works of all genuine believers will be judged as the evidence of saving faith.

The example of the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46)

Believers and unbelievers at the same judgment.

Judgment is not an investigation but a public revelation.

The judgment of the sheep is not based on their meriting eternal life by their good works.

Salvation of the sheep is of grace: "blessed" (free gift), "inherit" (not earned)

"from the foundation" (evidence of the Father's choice from eternity)

The good works of the sheep act as evidence of the King's righteous judgment.

The surprise of the sheep show that these good works were done out of faith in Christ and love for Christ and his brothers and sisters, not out of seeking to earn or merit salvation.

What about rewards for believers (and degrees of rewards)?

The Bible teaches that there will be rewards, but even these are by God's grace!

The nature of the reward probably has to do with capacity for enjoying fellowship with God himself. And it is clear that there will be no feelings of jealousy or envy. In fact, we will rejoice in one another's joy! (Lk. 19:12-27; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Matt. 5:11-12; 6:19-21; 25:23)