

JUDGMENT DAY

THE FIRST RESURRECTION & THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

“ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power... “
 “ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.”
 Rev. 20:6a, 11 NKJV



Review

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, our lives will be examined for the good and bad things we have done. The word "bad" refers to things "of no value," like mowing the lawn or making a meal. The things of no value are not necessarily sinful, but of no eternal value. God will reveal the good things, the things of no value, and the hidden things of our lives. The hidden things are good things that no one knew about (in the dark), that is, hidden motives, purposes, and attitudes. We will be praised by Christ as He reveals and rewards the unknown and good things of our lives. Everyday duties are not rewarded (they are wood, hay, and stubble), but our motives and attitude while doing them can be pure gold. God is very interested in our attitudes, motives, and purposes, which reflect the fruit of the Spirit in us. The rewards a believer receives are of great eternal value, above and beyond what we could hope. Thus, we will be eternally at peace with God, forever full of joy, enabled to hold a position of great authority with true accomplishment, have real importance and value, and, on top of it all, the Almighty God will give us praise.

INTRODUCTION

The Age of Grace began in the mid-first century and will end at the Rapture, at which time believers are taken to the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC). After that, two more judgments are in God's plan: the First Resurrection (FR) and the Great White Throne (GWT). Consider the last two judgments: who will be at these judgments, what is judged, and when will they occur?

The reason for three judgments is that every person who has ever lived must someday be judged, thereby

establishing justice on earth (Isa. 42:4). Billions of lives hang in the balance, but we know judgment will be fair and righteous. The JSC is for saved individuals in our age (Age of Grace); the First Resurrection is next, and for those with the hope (or promise) of an earthly Kingdom. The final judgment, the Great White Throne, will completely wrap thing up by considering the unsaved of all the ages, and those who are saved during the Kingdom.

BIBLE TRUTH

The First Resurrection

In the chart at the end of this section, green represents the Age of Grace, which has been discussed. The blue represents the First Resurrection (FR) and those involved. The FR was promised by God long ago, that is, raising the dead believers of all previous ages so they can enter the Kingdom (Matt. 25:34). Thus, "first" is a reference to this resurrection being mentioned first in the Bible, even though the Rapture occurs first in actual time. The FR does not result in people going directly to Heaven, but into the earthly Kingdom (their specific hope). Many of those who enter the Kingdom will be those we have read about in the Bible. The FR will also include believers who are alive at that time, and many alive unbelievers; we will explain this as we proceed. Alive people are not resurrected, but brought into the Kingdom.

"So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say unto you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'" (Matt. 19:28). Though not specifically stated, this is the First Resurrection. The FR occurs in the regeneration, that is, when Christ sits on the throne of His glory. He sits on His throne of His glory in the thousand-year Kingdom. This establishes the fact the FR will occur when He returns to sit on His throne—His Second Coming. At that time, He will destroy His enemies and establish the earthly Kingdom. The first coming was at His birth, and the Second Coming at the close of the Day of the Lord (see chart below). The Rapture does not enter into this count for two reasons: 1) He intentionally *does not come to the earth* at the Rapture, but meets us in the air; and 2) the Rapture is part of the mystery, and was not revealed to the Gospel writers (or in Revelation). At the FR, the twelve Apostles will be sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. So, some degree of judgment is made, certainly to determine who gets into the kingdom; it is

not known if this judgment also considers rewards. There is no fear or shame for believers in the FR (Isa. 54:4).

" 'When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Matt. 25:31-34). While on the throne of His glory, all nations will be gathered before Him. Remember, this is not our judgment; we will be in Heaven when this takes place. God has made it clear that our hope/promise is of a heavenly home (Phil.3:20; Eph. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thes. 4:17). The FR is seven-plus years after the Rapture.¹ This judgment is for anyone with an earthly Kingdom hope, which we will assume includes all those living before and after the Age of Grace (see chart). Believers like Ezekiel, David, Ruth, Moses, Abraham, Adam, and Eve will be in the FR. The saved are raised from the dead for this judgment; they will be given new, glorified bodies. The unsaved dead await a future judgment. The believers that are alive at the FR also take part, but the nature of their bodies is uncertain. Will they have new, glorified bodies, or go into the Kingdom with natural bodies? Those resurrected from the dead get glorified bodies, but it is not clear what happens to those who are alive. If they go into the Kingdom with natural bodies, they will die during the Kingdom, which we know can happen (Isa. 65:20), and receive glorified bodies later.

The difficult part of the verses above is to know if "nations" means actual nations or individuals within the nations. We know that God has promised to bless them that bless Israel, and curse them that curse Israel (Gen.

¹ There are seven years of tribulation, plus the Day of the Lord, which is not one day but of unknown length.

12:1-3). It seems the nations will be actual nations, and Christ will judge how nations, in official national policies, treated Israel. If a nation was a supporter, an ally of Israel, that will be a sheep nation and allowed to enter the Kingdom. The determination of whether an ally or foe may be based primarily on historical facts, since when Christ comes to defend Israel, there is no one to help; He has to do it alone (Isa. 63:3). God has judged nations in the past (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome), without affecting the personal salvation of the individuals within that nation. There is no resurrection of the dead in the sheep nations; only those alive at the time of this judgment will enter the Kingdom. Those within the sheep nations can be saved or unsaved; the unsaved will go in with mortal bodies and die a normal death. The goat nations, those that hated Israel and were not kind to her, will be sent **"into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"** (Matt 25:41).² However, the alive, saved, individuals within the goat nations will be brought into the Kingdom. Apparently, in the Kingdom, some will have glorified bodies and some will have regular human bodies.³ This may not be a weird as it sounds because Christ will eat and drink in the Kingdom with a resurrected body; so, the new body has some similarities to that of the old body (Matt. 26:19).

Matthew 24:31 reads, **"'And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'**" In the context of Matthew, the gathering of the elect refers to the First Resurrection, which, as the Rapture, will occur at the sound of a trumpet. This trumpet sound will be heard by everyone on earth; it is loud, clear, and people will know what it means (Isa.18:3). Contrarily, the trumpet call for the Rapture seems to be heard only in Heaven, the heavenly gathering of believers of our Age. Not only will everyone on earth hear the trumpet for the First Resurrection, but everyone will see the Son of Man coming (Matt. 24:30). For the First Resurrection, the dead believers are resurrected and the alive believers are

gathered by His angels from around the entire world; they all remain on the earth for the Kingdom.

An interesting thing occurs at the First Resurrection: the good (believers) are gathered and the bad (unbelievers) are taken away. **"'Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left' "** (Matt. 24:40-41). This does not describe the Rapture, where the good are taken away; here the ones taken are the unbelievers (bad). **"'But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be ... and [they] did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be' "** (Matt. 24:37-39, brackets added). In Noah's day, the bad were taken by the flood, and the same thing occurs here; the bad are taken out of this world. The bad are taken to the same place as the goat nations—Hades. Many of Christ's parables (Matt. 13:29-30, 40-43, 47-50) teach the bad will be taken away and the good will remain so they can enter the Kingdom.

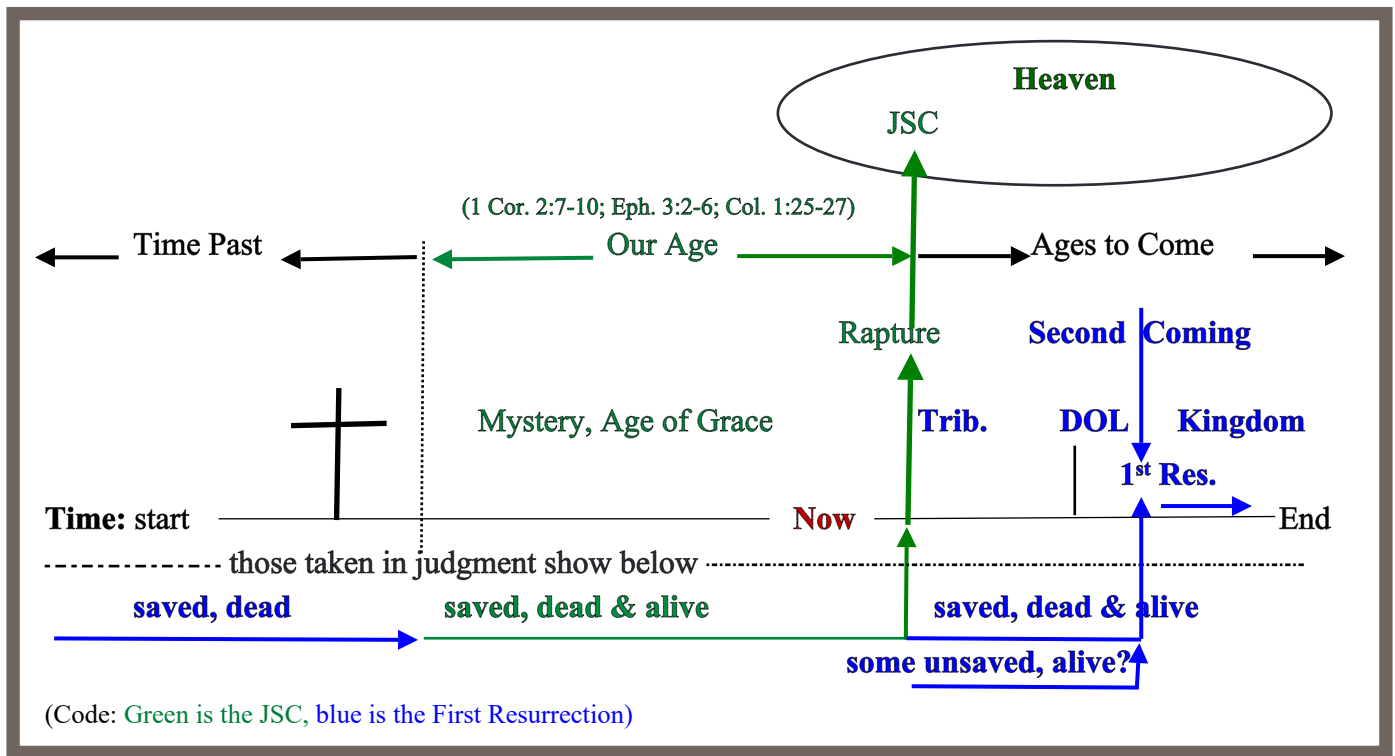
"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4-6). These verses clearly teach two judgments. The First Resurrection is designed to resurrect the Kingdom believers of past ages (those who were promised an earthly Kingdom and believed God). The believers of old are resurrected, given glorified bodies, and enter into the Kingdom. God gave those believers the promise of an earthly Kingdom, and for Him to be true to His word, they must be raised to be

² Apparently they go to Hades temporarily, then into everlasting fire after the Great White Throne.

³ Flesh and blood cannot enter the heavenly Kingdom, but the earthly Kingdom is different (Job 19:26; 1 Cor. 15:50). Those who enter the earthly Kingdom with mortal bodies will die sometime, then get glorified bodies later.

with Christ in the Kingdom (Lk. 13:28-29; Heb. 11:10). The Kingdom believers alive at the time of the First Resurrection are also taken into the Kingdom. Those taken into the Kingdom live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. The unsaved dead will not be resurrected

at this time. The believers in the First Resurrection are blessed and given eternal life. The next judgment will be composed mostly of the unsaved; their fate will be eternal damnation, called the second death.



Revelation 20:6b is important to understand: **"but they shall be priests of God and of Christ...."** This phrase ties in exactly with the promise given in Exodus 19:6: **"'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'"** God gave Israel two promises centuries ago: 1) she would be a kingdom of priests unto Him, and 2) He would make of her a holy nation. Both of these promises will be fulfilled at the FR; the fulfillment explains why God allows sheep nations into the Kingdom. The first promise will be kept when the people of Israel become priests to reach the sheep nations (mostly unsaved). Israel will be, **"... a light to the Gentiles ... to the ends of the earth"** (Isa 49:6b). The second promise is kept when everyone in Israel is saved (Rom. 11:26); they become a holy nation. Israel's ministry is to the masses of unsaved people around the world. Christ will be reigning over Israel, so the primary need for priests is not in Israel. However, outside of Israel are the sheep nations, the kingdom of priests will minister to them, and many will be saved. There will be

people born during the Kingdom, who also will need to be instructed about the Lord. Just as Israel has important "God work" to do, God has a purpose and ministry for us also, judging the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

The Great White Throne

We have seen this passage from Revelation: **"But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power...."** (Rev. 20:5-6). From this passage we learn there is another judgment one thousand years after the First Resurrection. This judgment is related to the second death (damnation, or eternal separation from God). This final judgment completes, wraps up, all the judgments scheduled for humans.

The details of this final judgment are found in Revelation. **"Then I saw a great white throne and Him**

who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 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. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:11-15).

Referring to the chart below, red represents the Great White Throne (GWT). There is great fear for many at this judgment. God appears to be the judge, but we know all judgment has been given to Christ. The phrase "standing before God," may be best translated "standing before the throne" (Majority Greek Text) with Christ as the judge. All those present are standing when John saw this vision; they will soon bow down to the Almighty. There will be more people at this judgment than any other, by far. All the unsaved dead of all the ages will be there, comprising the majority of all people. Remember, most of the saved dead have already been raised and judged (JSC and FR). This judgment has no power over those who were in the FR; perhaps they will go to the GWT and then to Heaven or they may pass directly into Heaven.⁴

This judgment will include all those previously not judged. The bodies of the dead in the grave, sea, or anywhere else, will be raised. It does not matter where the atoms of the deceased bodies are, God will raise their bodies according to His power and knowledge. Clearly, these judgments unite body, soul, and spirit. The bodies of the unsaved have been in the grave, the sea, or scattered; their souls and spirits have been in Hades.

Hades is the place for the souls and spirits of the dead. Originally, it was divided into two parts. One part was for the souls and spirits of the saved dead (called Paradise and Abraham's bosom), and was a place of comfort and security (Lk. 16:19-26; 23:43). The other part was reserved for the unsaved and was a place of suffering and torment. Hades, often translated Hell in the New Testament, is equivalent to Sheol in the Old Testament. Between Paradise and the suffering area there was a huge gulf which no one could cross. It seems at the time of Christ's ascension, the Paradise portion was delivered to Heaven (Eph. 4:8-10). From that time until the GWT, the souls and spirits of the saved are in Heaven. However, the suffering portion of Hades still contains the souls and spirits of the unsaved of all ages. In Revelation 20:13-14, death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, meaning the bodies of the unsaved will be raised from the dead to join their souls and spirits (from Hades) in judgment before Christ; then cast into the lake of fire.

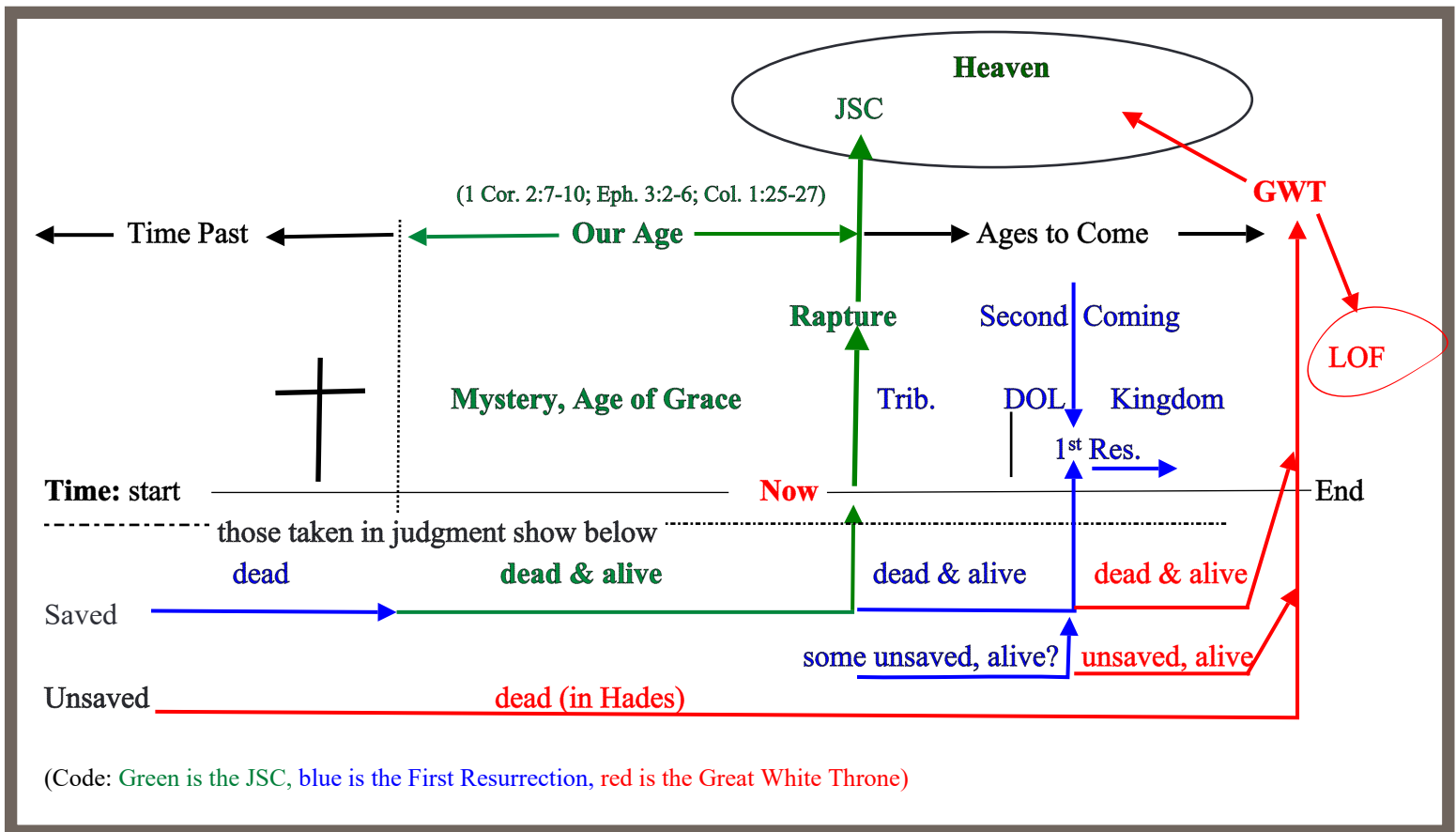
At the GWT there is no distinction between people, small or great; all are treated the same, but justly. The books are opened, and those who do not know Christ as Savior are judged according to their works. They will all be found guilty and have to pay for their sins. This is the second death (they died once physically, now spiritually). They will be cast into the lake of fire (this is spiritual death, i.e., complete separation from God). Those people who are atheists, agnostics, or whatever religion, are all judged fairly. If a person says all his or her life, "No God," that is exactly what he or she gets, judgment based upon a life without God. No one can measure up to God's standards; it is impossible to get to Heaven without a substitute to pay the penalty for sin. At the GWT, there is one other book opened, the Book of Life. If a person's name is in this Book, he or she is saved and will go to Heaven. A person gets his or her name in this Book (and prevents it from being blotted out) by faith in Christ, Who died as each person's substitute. The GWT will determine where one spends eternity, the degree of punishment for the unsaved, and reward for the saved.

⁴ The Bible mentions a new Heaven and earth, seemingly after the Kingdom. The new Heaven and earth is a complex topic and outside the scope of this study. In the chart, Heaven represents the eternal state.

A life completely separated from God will be Hell. On earth, a person can enjoy countless natural provisions from God and the special benefits He bestows on all those living, at no cost and without a person's recognition. The person may say he or she does not need God, but says this while enjoying all His benefits. In the end, a person gets what he or she has always wanted: no God. However, no God means isolation from God and His benefits. The person will be thrown into a lake of fire and into outer darkness (dark, empty space) where there

is only loneliness, despair, isolation, pain, and suffering—just the opposite of what the believer receives in Heaven.

The GWT gathers for judgment all the unsaved dead of all the ages (see chart below). Note: LOF is the lake of fire. There will also be some unsaved people who are alive as the Kingdom closes. They will be judged. There will also be many people (some dead, some alive) who were saved during the Kingdom, thanks to the nation of



priests; they also will be judged. After the GWT, not one person will be left who has not been judged.

Time issue: Billion of people will be at the GWT, many more than at the JSC or FR. How this judgment proceeds time-wise, is not known. Probably as suggested for the JSC, that is, it is done all at one time with the entire group, billions of people; but in God's omniscience, it may seem to each person as though Christ were addressing him or her personally.

Babies, Miscarriages, Abortions, and Tragic Events

Over the course of human history, there have been a staggering number of infant deaths, spontaneous miscarriages, abortions, and tragic births. What is their fate? We know God is gracious and merciful; He does not hold anyone accountable for sin if the person is incapable of knowing what sin is, or that he or she is sinning. If a person never was able to know sin, or to trust in Christ (due to death or disability), then God in His grace will consider that. We know God is fair, just, compassionate, and merciful, so that provides us comfort as to their fate.

CONCLUSIONS

The Three judgments to come:

- **Judgment Seat of Christ:** at the Rapture (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thes. 4:14-18)
- **First Resurrection:** at the Second Coming of Christ (Matt. 19:28, 25:31-46; Rev.20:4-6)
- **Great White Throne:** after the Kingdom (Rev. 20:11-15)

Why three judgments?

The three judgments are designed to bring each person who ever lived before the Lord for a fair and just evaluation. The judgments bring all the ages in human history to an end, and determine the eternal future for every individual. Our judgment (for those who are believers, dead or alive, in the Age of Grace) is the Judgment Seat of Christ. Christ is the Judge at all three judgments.

What criteria are judgment based upon?

Judgment Seat of Christ: Only believers who were in the Age of Grace are at this judgment. This is not a judgment related to sin, secret or known, but for the purpose of rewarding and praising the person. Most of our rewards are based upon the degree the Holy Spirit was allowed to work our lives, creating Christ-like actions and attitudes.

First Resurrection: This judgment will determine which people will be allowed to enter the earthly millennial Kingdom. The majority of believers at this

judgment will have died long ago. This is the first resurrection of believers (other than the AOG). Nations that were allies of Israel also may enter the Kingdom; the unsaved in those nations will be the priestly concern of Israel.

Great White Throne: Unbelievers of all the ages (dead or alive) will have their works judged. Unbelievers will be found guilty of sin and have to pay the penalty—the lake of fire. Believers will be judged out of the Book of Life. One can get into that Book only by faith in Jesus Christ. Believers will go to Heaven to be with the Lord.

Do I have to fear the coming judgments?

Judgment Seat of Christ: Believers have nothing to fear. In fact, at the Judgment Seat of Christ the good, secret motives and attitudes of our hearts will be brought to light. This is a time when Christ welcomes us and praises us, not a time of shame or rejection.

First Resurrection: There will be no fear for believers at the FR; for unbelievers, in the goat nations, there will be fear because they will be sent to Hades to be judged later at the GWT.

Great White Throne: There will be no fear for those whose names are written in the Book of Life. There will be fear for unbelievers at the GWT. Most people there will be unsaved, and judgment will be a terrible thing, with terrible consequences. However, if you are alive now, there is a way of escaping this judgment and going to the JSC instead (see Gospel).

GOSPEL

Salvation is God's gift of grace to deliver a person from the penalty of sin—the lake of fire. God says there is one way to receive His free gift, which is by believing you are a sinner and that Jesus Christ died to pay your sin's penalty. The Bible says: "... **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**" (Rom. 3:23); "**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Rom. 6:23); "**But God**

demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:8-9).

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