

THIRD JUDGMENT: THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT



In the Bible's book of Revelation, the Apostle John is given visions that explain what will take place in the future. One of the visions John receives is recorded in Revelation 20 and concerns a judgment that will take place after Christ's Second Coming. After Jesus returns, the devil is

imprisoned for 1,000 years, and during that time Christ will rule as King upon the earth (a time that is often referred to as the millennial reign of Christ; Revelation 20:1-6). Once the 1,000 years are completed, Satan is released, the last human rebellion against God is crushed, and Satan is consigned forever to what the Bible calls the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10). The Bible describes what happens next: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him Who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and Books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the Books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15). This event is often referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. Revelation pictures Jesus as the judge over all the living and the dead, a role He predicted during His earthly ministry: "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). It is the final judgment of God upon humankind. After this event, there will never again need to be a trial, and God will never again need to act as judge. According to Scripture, the Book of Life contains the names of all who have trusted in God through Christ for their salvation and have been saved from God's judgment. Paul mentions the book of life in one of his epistles: "Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these . . . whose names are in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3). The Bible makes it clear that no person will spend eternity with God based on his works and that it is only faith in Christ that saves a person (Ephesians 2:8-9), John records that those whose names are not found in the Book of Life (those outside of Christ) are consigned to the lake of fire based on their deeds (Revelation 20:13, 15). Our works cannot save us, but they may condemn us. **Believers in Christ escape the Great White Throne Judgment because their debts and transgressions have been paid for by Christ.**

THE THREE JUDGMENTS OF THE EARTH

FIRST DESTRUCTION BY FLOOD



Three destructions' of the earth are described in the Bible, one past and two yet to come. The first destruction came when the Flood covered the earth in the days of Noah, sparing only eight righteous persons. (Gen. 6 v.8) In one of the best-known promises in the Old Testament, however, signified by the rainbow, God promised Noah that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood. Nevertheless, two passages in the Bible predict that God will yet again destroy the earth.

SECOND DESTRUCTION BY FIRE



This destruction will come by fire, after which He will restore all things. (Isaiah 65:17-20) speaks of a restored earth, "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress."

2 Peter 3:4-14 describes the judgment of fire reserved or kept in store; "But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed."

THIRD AND FINAL DESTRUCTION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH



This destruction is described in our text. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea." (Rev. 21:1)

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HEAVENS

Why will God destroy the heavens? Very simply, because the atmospheric heavens are filled with evil. Whenever we read about heaven in the Bible, we should keep in mind that there are three heavens: [the atmospheric heaven around the earth](#), [the stellar heaven, which contains the great galaxies that we view on a starry night](#), and [the third heaven, or the throne of God](#).

(2 Corinthians 12:2) "I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows." and (Revelation 4:5) "Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;"

WHY THE DESTRUCTION ON THE HEAVENS?



Our text indicates that God will destroy the atmospheric and stellar heavens but not the place of His headquarters. **But He will destroy both the atmospheric and stellar heavens, where Satan lives.** Ephesians 6:12 indicates that Satan, who is the god "of this dark

world," and his emissaries are performing spiritual wickedness in heavenly realms. "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Therefore, after the final rebellion of Satan, God will destroy this earth that is so marred and cursed by Satan's evil. He will include the atmospheric heaven and stellar heavens to guarantee that all semblance of evil has been cleared away. (Revelation 20:11) "Then I saw a great white throne and the One Who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them." (Revelation 21:1) "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." (2 Peter 3:10-12) "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, **because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?**" (Isaiah 34:4) "All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall wither like a leaf withering on a vine, or fruit withering on a fig tree."

THE THREE JUDGMENTS OF MAN

FIRST JUDGMENT: JESUS TOOK OUR JUDGMENT OF SIN



Jesus Christ died in our place when He was crucified on the cross. We deserved to be the ones placed on that cross to die because we are the ones who live sinful lives. But Christ took the punishment on Himself in our place—He substituted Himself for us and took what we rightly deserved. "God made

Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). (1 Peter 2:24) "He Himself bore our sins" in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by His wounds you have been healed." We can only pay the price of sin on our own by being punished and placed in hell for all eternity. But God's Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to pay for the price of our sins. Because He did this for us, we now have the opportunity to not only have our sins forgiven, but to spend eternity with Him. In order to do this we must place our faith in what Christ did on the cross. **We cannot save ourselves; we need a substitute to take our place. The death of Jesus Christ is the substitutionary atonement.**

SECOND JUDGMENT: THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST



We should not look at the judgment seat of Christ as God judging our sins, but rather as God rewarding us for our lives. Yes, as the Bible says, we will have to give an account of ourselves. Part of this is surely answering for the sins we committed. However, that is not going to be the primary focus of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers are rewarded based on how faithfully they served Christ (1 Corinthians 9:4-27; 2 Timothy 2:5). Some of the things we might be judged on are how well we obeyed the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), **how victorious we were over sin** (Romans 6:1-4), and **how well we controlled our tongues** (James 3:1-9). The Bible speaks of **believers receiving crowns for different things based on how faithfully they served Christ** (1 Corinthians 9:4-27; 2 Timothy 2:5). The various crowns are described in 2 Timothy 2:5, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4, and Revelation 2:10. James 1:12 is a good summary of how we should think about the judgment seat of Christ: "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."