

The Final Judgment

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Throughout the ages, there have been countless stories, jokes, metaphors, and cartoons depicting the final judgment. Typically the setting is God looking down upon an individual at the “pearly gates” of heaven, with the mighty Lord standing inside of the gates rendering a deserving verdict based upon the individual’s life on earth.

Nearly all Christian religions agree that there will be a final judgment following the resurrection. All mankind will be given a final reward based upon their faith and/or works upon the earth, with some sects claiming a judgment based more on faith than works.

Judged According to Our Works

The scriptures abound with passages that clearly indicate we will be judged at the end times according to our works. Consider the following scripture from the book of Revelation: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12).

There are numerous New Testament scriptures that directly correlate the reward that people will receive from their works on earth (such as Matt. 16:27, 1 Cor. 3:14, and 2 Tim 4:14), each referring to the final judgment. The final judgment is the last and ultimate in a succession of judgments starting with premortal life, then earthly life, and concluding with resurrection. Not to be confused with

the partial judgment that takes place immediately after our death, the final judgment takes place after our resurrection and the millennial reign of Christ.

The Works we will be Judged Upon

The works on which we will be judged will include our words, thoughts, and actions. With respect to words, Jesus Christ taught his disciples, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36–37). With respect to our thoughts, the prophet Alma taught, “Our thoughts will also condemn us” (Alma 12:14). See the Sword Series™ essay on Faith and Works.

Where Our Works are Recorded

Our works are written in the books referred to in the scripture from Revelation 20:12. The prophet Joseph Smith taught that this scriptural reference was true in that we will be judged based upon records kept on earth. Joseph F. Smith said, “We are going to be judged out of the things written in books, out of the revelations of God, out of the temple records, out of those things which the Lord has commanded us to keep. ... There will be the record in heaven which is a perfect record” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 2:200).

The apostle Paul taught about being judged out of records, but a different record—that which is written in our hearts. Paul wrote to the Romans, “Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Romans 2:15). He likewise wrote to the Corinthians, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:2–3).

These records written in our hearts will be made known during the final judgment and be used to render the final verdict upon us. The prophet John Taylor reinforced this principle when he said “[The individual] tells the story himself, and bears witness against himself. ... That record that is written by the man himself in the tablets of his own

mind—that record that cannot lie—will in that day be unfolded before God and angels, and those who sit as judges” (Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Latter-day Prophets Speak*, 56–57).

Jesus Christ and His Delegates Will Judge Us

We will be judged not only by the Lord Jesus Christ in all his glory, but by those to whom Christ delegates the power and authority to judge. God the Father will not judge anyone, but will delegate that power and authority to the savior (John 5:22). Likewise this same delegation of judgment will take place as Christ assigns the original twelve apostles the power to judge: “that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28 and Luke 22:30). There will be others appointed as well by the hand Christ who will be given the power and authority to judge righteously.

The Consequences of our Final Judgment

The result of the Final Judgment will result in everyone being assigned to four possible places to dwell for all eternity: “the celestial kingdom (the highest degree of glory), the terrestrial kingdom (the second degree), the telestial kingdom (the lowest degree), ...[or] outer darkness (the kingdom of the devil—not a degree of glory)” (Gospel Principles, 297). Doctrine and Covenants 76 describes each of these places in detail and discusses the choices we make and their effects on our assignment to the appropriate place—regardless of religious affiliation. See the Sword Series™ essay on heaven.

“We speak, think, and act according to celestial, terrestrial, or telestial law. Our faith in Jesus Christ, as shown by our daily actions, determines which kingdom we will inherit” (Gospel Principles, 298). Christian churches should urge all of its members to be faithful in mortality to take full advantage of the atoning power of Christ through repentance every day, so that we will remain worthy and prepared for the final judgment. If we do this, we can return to live with our Heavenly Father in the celestial kingdom.

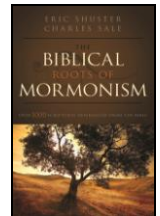
Conclusion

Christian doctrine outlines how the final judgment will take place and the fact that although Jesus Christ will oversee the final judgment, many others will be involved in the actual execution of judgment. This is in complete agreement with the Bible and other modern day scriptures.

One can also see that the doctrine provides detail on the things for which we will be judged and the processes of judgment. This detail delivers valuable insights that help us view our own specific actions on earth in a broader perspective, generating a greater appreciation for the importance of self-control while living in mortality. The doctrine on the final judgment fits extremely well with the greater picture of how the afterlife will unfold for each of us. See the Sword Series™ essay on the plan of salvation.

About The Sword Series™

The Sword Series™ is a collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed for the education and enjoyment of all. These essays later inspired the book *The Biblical Roots of Mormonism* by Eric Shuster (2010). The views expressed in the Sword Series™ are those of Eric Shuster based upon his study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of Eric Shuster and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of Eric Shuster is prohibited. Copyright 2008 ©



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