

ESCHATOLOGY (28)

Rapture Time View #4 - The Mid-Tribulation Rapture View.

This view holds to the position that the Church will be raptured in the middle of the Tribulation period, before the final 3 ½ years of wrath. This view states that the Church saints cannot be exposed to God's wrath and concludes that God's wrath doesn't start until the bowl judgments, which occur approximately 3 ½ years into the Tribulation (Rev. 16:1ff).

The main objection to this view is that the entire seven year Tribulation is classified as being the "wrath of God." For example, in Rev. 15:1, we are specifically told that the remaining things will "finish" or "complete" the wrath of God, indicating that all previous things were also the wrath of God. This is also established early in the book of Revelation—Rev. 6:17. Therefore, the entire Tribulation period may be classified as a time of wrath and the Church is not destined or appointed to wrath (I Thess. 5:9).

Rapture Time View #5 - The Pre-wrath Rapture View.

This view is very close to the Mid-Tribulation view, but is a little more specific in saying that the rapture occurs sometime between the sixth and seventh seal judgments in Revelation (Rev. 6:12-8:1). Pre-wrath proponents maintain a difference between "the Day of the Lord" and "the Great Tribulation." The argument is there is no wrath of God during the Tribulation time and there is no tribulation during the wrath time.

The fact is the entire time period of the Tribulation is classified as a time of wrath and the Church is not appointed to the time of wrath (i.e. Rev. 6:15-16).

The only position which may be solidly defended is the Pre-Tribulation rapture position.

This is the position that we dogmatically believe and defend.

QUESTION #17 – What judgment do N.T. believers face?

New Testament believers face the **Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ** judgment to have their works analyzed to determine the gain of eternal reward or the loss of eternal reward. This is not about heaven or hell, for all who have believed on Christ are guaranteed everlasting life—John 3:16, 18, 36.

Q17a - What are some of the passages of Scripture that deal with this judgment?

- 1) Romans 14:10 ; 2) I Cor. 3:10-15 ; 3) I Cor. 4:1-5 ;
- 4) I Cor. 9:24-27 5) II Cor. 5:10 ; 6) I Thess. 2:19 ;
- 7) II Tim. 4:8 ; 8) Heb. 13:17 ; 9) James 1:12 ;
- 10) I Peter 5:4 ; 11) II Peter 1:10-11 ; 12) II John 8 .

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Q-17b - When does this judgment of N.T. believers take place?

It is not specifically stated exactly when this judgment occurs, but the most logical conclusion is that it will occur just **after** the Rapture.

In Rev. 22:12, a text specifically addressed to the “churches” (22:16), it is stated that when Christ returns rewards will be rendered to “every” man. We also know from Hebrew 13:17 that there will be some form of leadership report given concerning the flock, which would indicate that the entire flock is present. Furthermore, in Rev. 4:4 the 24 elders have golden crowns (stephanos = victory crowns, not diadem = royalty crowns), which means the bema seat judgment has probably already taken place.

Based on these observations, it is safe to conclude that this judgment of believers will occur after Christ raptures His Church.

Q-17c - Where does this judgment of N.T. believers take place?

The specific place for this judgment is said to be the “bema of Christ” or “judgment seat of Christ.” In Romans 14:10 and II Cor. 5:10, the word translated in English “Judgment Seat” is the Greek word Bema, literally in Greek βῆμα—literally pronounced Bay-ma.

This particular word describes a raised place or platform on which rulers or judges sat when making important appearances or speeches (Acts 12:21). It was also a place where judicial decisions were made (Acts 18:12-17). The ruins of ancient Corinth feature a “judgment seat” in the town square where public rewards were given for victory in the Isthmian games and public punishments were administered.

From this word, we may conclude that Jesus Christ will judge every believer from His perched, enthroned position in heaven. This will be a very sacred and very judicial location. The judgment will be very serious and intimidating. Just the word “Bema” promotes this concept.

Q-17d - Who is at this Bema Seat Judgment?

Only N.T. believers will face this judgment. Paul is very clear to point out that this judgment only relates to those who have built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:11-12). No unbelievers will be present at this judgment. This is only a judgment for Church Age believers.

Q-17e - What is being judged at this judgment of N.T. believers?

What is actually being judged here at this judgment is the **nature of the believer’s life after salvation**. The purpose of this is to determine whether or not the believer invested himself in a life that God would deem as worthy or worthless. This judgment appears to be a review of everything the believer was involved in during his/her Christian life. Every believer who deserves praise will receive it and those who do not deserve praise will not get it. In fact, Paul challenges believers to “examine his own work” in view of these realities (Galatians 6:4).

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From Scripture, we may conclude that there are at least ten areas of judgment for the N.T. believer:

(Area of Judgment #1) - A believer will be judged on the basis of his/her works.

This is plainly stated in different passages that have to do with a judgment of the believer— I Cor. 3:13; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23.

There are at least two prerequisites for works that would be rewarded:

Prerequisite #1 – The works must be in accordance with revealed Scripture. II Tim. 2:5

Prerequisite #2 – The works must be done with the motive of honoring God.

I Cor. 4:5; Matt. 6:1-4; Col. 3:22-25. This was even Jesus' motive— John 17:4.

(Area of Judgment #2) - A believer will be judged on the basis of his/her words.

Many texts indicate that Jesus Christ will hold one accountable for what he/she said— Matt. 12:36-37; Luke 12:2-3; Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:29-32; James 3:1. This would include words:

1) Careless—Matt. 12:36-37; **2)** Hypocritical—Luke 12:1-3; **3)** Anger outbursts—Gal. 5:20-21; **4)** Dissension words—Gal. 5:20-21; **5)** Unwholesome words—Eph. 4:29; **6)** Slandorous words—Eph. 4:31; **7)** Filthy words—Eph. 5:4; **8)** False words—Eph. 4:25; **9)** Gossipy words—I Peter 3:10; **10)** Faulty doctrine—James 3:1.

(Area of Judgment #3) - A believer will be judged on the basis of his/her worship.

Forsaking fellowship with God's people at church will cost one rewards—Heb. 10:25; 13:17. Worship must be decent, orderly and reverent.

(Area of Judgment #4) - A believer will be judged on the basis of conformity to God's will.

Aspect #1 – God's will is specifically revealed in writing—i.e. "this is the will of God."

1 Thess. 4:3

Aspect #2 – God's will is personally revealed in Spirit-leading. Must yield, not quench or grieve.

Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19

(Area of Judgment #5) - A believer will be judged on the basis of his/her witnessing.

Jesus told the church in Philadelphia that they would be rewarded because they did not deny His name—Rev. 3:8. They testified that Jesus was God, Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and the Savior.

(Area of Judgment #6) - A believer will be judged on the basis of his/her thoughts.

Many texts indicate that Jesus Christ does judge thoughts—Heb. 4:12-13; Rev. 2:23. Even Paul was continually working on his own thought life—II Cor. 10:5. Award winners think on things right, true, pure, lovely, good and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).