

THE SIX DOCTRINES OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” **(1 Corinthians 3:11)**

Our right standing with God (being justified) comes only out of being in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. **(1 Timothy 2:5) (John 14:6) (John 3:3 & 5) (Acts 4:12)** The Apostle Paul also wrote, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” **(2 Corinthians 5:21)**

Only through believing in Jesus Christ can we be saved from our sins. Jesus Himself said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” **(John 3:16-18)**

Salvation (Eternal life) is a free gift. We cannot earn it, nor do we deserve it. We can do nothing to save ourselves as we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) We must all just simply receive the gift of eternal life by faith, by coming to Jesus Christ and accepting His offer of eternal life through repentance and faith in Him. **(Acts 20:21)** The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

In the book of Hebrews we see listed the six doctrines of our faith. “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” **(Hebrews 6:1-2)**

In this passage of Scripture six doctrines of our faith are identified:

1) Repentance from dead works, 2) Faith toward God, 3) The doctrine of baptisms, 4) Laying on of hands, 5) Resurrection of the dead, and 6) Eternal Judgment.

These six doctrines of our faith will now be discussed in turn.

i) REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

True repentance must always precede true faith. Without such repentance, faith alone is an empty profession. Christ and His apostles preached “Repent and believe.” Any preacher who leaves out the call to repentance is misleading sinners and misrepresenting God. Jesus Himself made it clear to those who told Him about the Galileans who had been killed by Pilate, “...unless you repent you will all likewise perish” **(Luke 13:3)**

WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT

- **Repentance is not the conviction of sin.** Conviction brings people to repentance. However many people go to the altar feeling guilty of their sin, but are not willing to let go of their sin.
- **Repentance is not remorse.** A person may have remorse over what they have done, but not wish to repent of what they have done. A person can stand before a judge with tears in his eyes, feeling sorry for himself, not wanting to go to jail, yet not sorry for breaking the law.
- **Repentance is not just a determination to do better (Reformation).** Many people make New Years resolutions, however they do not last long. Whilst repentance does involve reformation, if God is not involved in the reformation, if it is not based on the work of the cross, then it is not repentance and it will ultimately fail. Unrepentant Christians are most likely to be caught up in religious works.
- **Repentance is not just being religious.** People can even serve in a church and raise their hand and even shout “Hallelujah” but still not repent.
- **Repentance is not “just believism.”** Repentance is not just an emotional feeling.

WHY WE NEED TO REPENT

Repentance is necessary because we have all sinned. “For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.” **(Romans 3:23)** There are around 103 sins defined in the Bible in every category imaginable, however the root of all these sins is the same. This root is the rejection of the rule and ways of God, due to unbelief. This root of unbelief must be dealt with through repentance.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” **(John 3:16)** The need for repentance must be focused on the condition of a person’s heart before a Holy God. The Prophet Jeremiah said, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?” **(Jeremiah 17:9)**

A person who has not repented is simply committed to going his own way and doing his own thing apart from God.

WHAT IS TRUE REPENTANCE

TRUE repentance has two compulsory components:

- 1) **TRUE REPENTANCE** is based on a recognition that we have sinned. It is the supernatural power of God that has been placed in the gospel, which enables a person to repent. **(God’s saving Grace)**

- 2) **TRUE REPENTANCE** also involves a recognition that we are responsible to turn from our sins to God. Repentance is an inner change of mind resulting in an outward turning back, or turning around, to face and to move in a completely new direction. ***This turning around has three elements. A turning from sin and dead works, a turning to God, and an intent to serve Him and to obey His commands.***

ii) FAITH TOWARD GOD

After a person repents, he must then make a *personal response to the gospel.*

THE BASIC FACTS OF THE GOSPEL ARE:

- 1) *Christ was delivered by God the Father to the punishment of death on account of our sins*
- 2) *Christ was buried*
- 3) *God raised Him from the dead on the third day, and*
- 4) *Righteousness is received from God through **believing** these facts*

To receive salvation and the gift of eternal life, each individual soul must make a **direct personal response to Christ.**

THIS PERSONAL RESPONSE TO CHRIST CAN BE DESCRIBED IN MANY WAYS:

i) Calling upon the Name of Christ as Lord

"For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

ii) Coming to Christ

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **(Matt. 11:28)** "...and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." **(John 6:37b)**

iii) Personally receiving Christ

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. **(John 1:11-13)**

iv) Drinking of the water of life, which Christ alone can give

Jesus said, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" **(John 4:14)**

Each individual soul must make a direct personal response to Christ from the heart. Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me." **(Revelations 3:20)**

iii) THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

“There are two Christian Baptisms. One is the Water Baptism and the other is being Baptised in the Holy Spirit by Jesus. They will now be discussed in turn.

WATER BAPTISM

“The bible makes it clear that water baptism is not an optional extra. Jesus Himself was baptized, even though He had no need to repent of sin. **(Mark 1:9)** Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize new believers. **(Matthew 28:19)** Water baptism is for all believers. **(Mark 16:16)** *Water Baptism is an outward expression of what has already taken place in the heart of the new believer.*

Before a person is baptized he must have first repented of his sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. **(Acts 16:30-33)** Water Baptism, or baptism by full immersion, is also called the “Believers Baptism”

Baptism speaks of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we follow the Lord’s command to be baptized, we identify with Him in this way. When you accepted Christ as your Saviour, your sins were forgiven – you became “dead” to your past life.

(2 Corinthians. 5:17) Baptism signifies this death. The water into which you are immersed is like a “grave” and indicates that you were buried with Christ. As you rise from the water you testify that you are now a new creation, rising to newness of life (resurrection power) in Christ Jesus. **(Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12)**

In Water Baptism we identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” **(Galatians 2:20)** Water Baptism also helps to enable a new believer to separate themselves from their ‘old man’, which was dead in sin, whilst reinforcing their commitment to walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus. **(Romans 6:1-14)**

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Once a person becomes a Christian, God has another wonderful gift for them - the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift is known as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks much about this experience. John the Baptist spoke of it, and revealed that Jesus is the Baptiser with the Holy Spirit. **(Mark 1:8)** The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is described in a number of different ways, each way referring to an aspect of this wonderful act:

- i) **Baptism in the Holy Spirit** (John 1:33) – which means immersion into the Spirit
- ii) **Gifts of the Spirit** (1 Corinthians 12) – emphasizing the gift aspect
- iii) **Receiving the Spirit** (Acts 19:2) – referring to the actual moment of reception
- iv) **Filled with the Spirit** (Acts 2:4) – suggesting something poured into a person

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is also spoken of as the promise from the Father, which the disciples were to wait for (**Luke 24:29**), and which they received on the day of Pentecost. (**Acts 2:33**)

Before a person can receive the Holy Spirit, they must be saved (Born Again). (**Acts 19:2a**)

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the submerging of the whole being into the Spirit of God. It is being filled with the Holy Spirit Who Himself is a living person.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to minister to others. Jesus promised His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would receive power to be His witnesses. (**Act 1:8**) After receiving the Holy Spirit, all the disciples become powerful preachers. Being Baptised in the Holy Spirit enables all believers to witness with greater joy and freedom, and with much more boldness when sharing with others who Jesus is, and what He has done for them. It also helps believers to enter into a richer spiritual awareness of the Lord.

God has given a lasting sign as evidence that we have been baptised in the Holy Spirit. That sign is speaking in tongues, or praying in the Spirit. (**Mark 16:17 and Acts 2:4**) The language that you receive when baptised in the Holy Spirit, is not one that you have learnt with the mind. However, you must use your own mouth and tongue to speak the words that God will give you.

The bible says that God gives good gifts. (**James 1:17a**) The Holy Spirit is one such good and perfect gift from God. **The baptism of the Holy Spirit is available to all believers.** Jesus said, "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." (**Luke 11:13**) When Jesus baptises us with the Holy Spirit, He does so in a very personal way, a way that seems to suit our individual lives and personalities.

For some it is at home alone and for others after being prayed for by other Christians. This was very common in the early house churches, (**Acts 8:17, Acts 19:6**), but not always so. (**Acts 10:44-46**) The basic requirement for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is defined by the Apostle Paul as the hearing of faith. Six steps of faith and obedience, which help a person to be Baptised in the Holy Spirit, are:

- 1) Repentance** (Acts 3:19) **and 2) Water Baptism** (Acts 2:38)
- 3) Being Thirsty and Hungry for more of the Spirit** (John 7:37-38, Matt. 5:6)
- 4) Asking for the Holy Spirit** (Luke 11:13)
- 5) Drinking (Active process of receiving)** (John 7:37 and Psalm 81:10), and
- 6) Yielding (Surrender of will, physical members and intellect)** (Rom. 6:13)

4) LAYING ON OF HANDS

The fourth foundational doctrine of the Christian Faith is that which is called “Laying on of hands” The laying on of hands is used on a number of occasions for specific purposes. These include:

i) **Transmitting a spiritual blessing or authority to the one upon whom hands are laid:**

In the Old Testament, Joseph brought his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh to his father Jacob, and Jacob blessed them by laying his hands on them. **(Gen. 48:14)**

Believers can also **lay hands on the sick**, and they will recover. **(Mark 16:17-18)**

Christians can also lay hands on other believers who are **seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit**. This was common in the early church. **(Acts 8:18)**

HOWEVER, THE SCRIPTURE ALSO WARNS US THAT THIS ORDINANCE OF LAYING HANDS UPON BELIEVERS IS NOT TO BE PRACTICED LIGHTLY OR CARELESSLY.

Paul told Timothy, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.” (1 Timothy 5:22)

The next purpose for laying on of hands is the **imparting of spiritual gifts** (Especially the gift of prophecy). The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome saying,

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established – that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” **(Romans 1:11-12)**

The Apostle Paul told Timothy, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” **(2 Timothy 1:6)**

ii) Acknowledging publicly some spiritual blessing or authority already received from God by the one upon whom hands are laid:

The Lord told Moses to lay hands on Joshua to inaugurate him in the sight of the congregation and to give some of his authority to him. **(Numbers 27:18-20)**

This action produced a tremendous result in Joshua. Now Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, and the children of Israel heeded him. **(Deuteronomy 34:9)**

iii) Publicly committing to God for some special task or ministry the one upon whom hands are laid:

When the Holy Spirit said for Barnabas and Saul to be separated for the work to which He had called them, the Church Elders at Antioch laid hands on them and sent them away.

The Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” **(Acts 13:2)**

“Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” **(Acts 13:3)**

THE APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS AND ELDERS IS ANOTHER NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF WHERE THE ORDINANCE OF LAYING ON OF HANDS IS USED.

(Acts 6:1-6 {deacons} and Acts 14:21-23 {Elders most likely})

5) RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The fifth of the foundational doctrines that are listed in Hebrews 6:1-2 is 'Resurrection of the dead.' The first four doctrines relate to this present time, *however this and the last doctrine* relate to the realm of eternity. There are two universal, irrevocable appointments of God: resurrection and judgment. To this universal appointment of resurrection from the dead, the Bible admits only one class of exceptions, those who never die. (These include those Christians who will be raptured, Enoch, Elijah and those who become righteous during the millennium rule of Christ and never die).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) **Judgment concerns the things done in the body while on earth. As it is for the things done in the body that man must answer, God has ordained that man should appear in his body before Him to answer for those things.**

Therefore resurrection of the body must precede eternal judgment.

There are two diverging destinies for those who die as believers and those who die having rejected Christ. After death there is a complete and permanent separation between the departed spirits of the righteous and the wicked. Prior to Christ's resurrection, the departed spirits of the righteous were consigned to a certain area of Sheol, the netherworld, which was called "Paradise". Since Christ's death and resurrection, the spirits of all believers who die, ascend immediately and directly into heaven and into the presence of God Himself. **(2 Corinthians 5:6, 8)**

For those who die as unbelievers, the dark angel of Death who is a minister of Satan's infernal kingdom, claims their spirit and gives it to another of Satan's dark angels called Hades. Hades takes charge of all the spirits of the unrighteous that he receives from the angel of Death and then conducts them to their appointed place of imprisonment.

However for all believers we can be comforted by the words of Jesus,

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die..." (John 11:25-26)

"Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." (John 8:51) AND

"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:15)

The believer's resurrection body will be incorruptible, immortal (incapable of death), a body of beauty and glory (free from all of man's present limitations), and it will be raised up from the grave by the power of the almighty God.

This contrasts with our earthly bodies which are corruptible and subject to sickness, decay, old age and death, and which are a continual source of humiliation as we struggle with sin, physical needs and limitations, and finally which is committed to the grave in weakness.

The total resurrection of the righteous, from the moment of Christ's own resurrection down to the resurrection of the tribulation martyrs, (just prior to the millennium), is called by the apostle John, "The First Resurrection." All those who take part in this resurrection are "blessed and holy," that is, they are all righteous believers:

They include, **i)** Christ Himself, and those of the Old Testament saints who were resurrected at the time that He was resurrected, **ii)** "those who are Christ's at His coming" (being those who died in the faith), **iii)** the two witnesses of the tribulation period, and **iv)** the remainder of the tribulation martyrs, who are resurrected at the close of the tribulation period, and who will share with Christ and the other saints the privilege of ruling and judging the nations on earth.

The "Final Resurrection" will be mainly for "the spiritually dead" (Those who died in sin and unbelief) and who were not written in the Book of Life. They will be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15) However, there are two categories of people in the "Final Resurrection" who will be delivered from condemnation. These are the righteous who died during Christ's millennial reign on earth, and the queen of the South (Sheba) and the men of Nineveh referred to by Jesus, who were never granted a revelation of Christ's atoning sacrifice. (Luke 11:31-32)

6) ETERNAL JUDGMENT

The sixth and last of the foundational doctrines is Eternal Judgment. Every person will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Several scriptures make this very clear.

“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” (Romans 14:10a)

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, ...” (2 Corin. 5:10a)

Each person will be judged according to the things that he did in the body here on earth. God’s judgment is tempered by His mercy and grace, which was manifested in the mediatorial office and the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus pleads for mercy and forgiveness for the sinner.

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 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.” **(Romans 5:6-9)**

In the first instance and by sovereign eternal right, judgment belongs to God the Father. The Apostle Peter speaks of “the Father who without partiality judges according to each one’s work” **(1 Peter 1:17)** Here judgment of all men is declared to be the office of God the Father. However in chapter five of John, Christ reveals that the Father has chosen in His sovereign wisdom to commit all judgment to the Son.

“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.” **(John 5:22-23)** “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” **(John 5:26-27)**

Because Christ is also the Son of man as well as the Son of God, (Having both a human and divine nature whilst here on earth), in His judgment He is able to make allowance, from His own experience, for all the infirmities and temptations of human flesh. So gracious and merciful, however, is the divine nature in the Son, as like the Father, Christ, too, is unwilling to administer judgment. For this reason He has, in turn transferred the final authority from His own person to the Word of God. Jesus Himself said,

“And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” **(John 12:47-48)**

The final authority of all judgment is vested in the Word of God.

This is the impartial, unchanging standard to which all men must one day answer. This same revelation concerning God’s Word is given in the Old Testament, for David says to God: “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever.” **(Psalm 119:160)** Therefore all the standards and principles of God’s judgment are contained within His Word and endure unchanged forever.

FOUR MAIN PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE JUDGMENT REVEALED IN GOD'S WORD:

1) THAT GOD'S JUDGMENT IS ACCORDING TO TRUTH

"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things." (**Rom. 2:1-2**) Jesus Himself says to the Father, "Your word is truth" (**John 17:17b**)

God's standard does not vary. It is always the truth – the revealed truth of God's Word and it applies just as much to the one who judges as to the one who is judged. (We must all ensure that we apply the truth to ourselves and to our own lives).

2) THAT JUDGMENT WILL BE RENDERED TO EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS

God's judgment is according to our "deeds" In heaven God preserves a complete and flawless record of the entire life of every person. According to this record of his deeds preserved on a heavenly scroll or "book", each person will one day be judged. In the account of the final judgment we read that:

"Books were opened...And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (**Revelation 20:12**)

The whole bible makes it plain that God in His judgment of man, takes into account not merely external actions, but also the deepest and most secret thoughts, impulses and motives of the heart.

"In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (**Romans 2:16**)

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God." (**1 Corinthians 4:5**)

3) THAT GOD'S JUDGMENT IS WITHOUT PARTIALITY (OR RESPECT OF PERSONS)

Men are often influenced in forming their judgments by such external appearances as race, religion, profession, social position, physical appearance, wealth and education. However God's judgment is not influenced or diverted by any of these things. (God also expects that all those who are charged with judging human affairs should never yield to this influence either).

"For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (**1 Samuel 16:7**)

4) THAT JUDGMENT IS ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT AVAILABLE TO THOSE BEING JUDGED

Each person will be judged according to measure of moral light and understanding which has been made available him. Those who have had the full knowledge of God's moral standards revealed to them through the law of Moses will be judged by that law.

“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.” **(Romans 2:12)**

But those who have not had the fuller revelation of the law of Moses, will not be judged by the law, but in accordance with the general revelation of God granted to the human race as a whole through the wonders of creation.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so they are without excuse. **(Romans 1:20)**

Whoever receives an additional and special revelation through God's Word however, will be judged by the higher standard of moral knowledge granted to them. Therefore judgment is according to light – according to the measure of moral knowledge granted to each person.

THREE FINAL JUDGMENTS

1) The judgment of Christian believers before the judgment seat of Christ

All true Christians will be judged first and will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. This is made clear in Scripture.

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”
(1 Peter 4:17-18)

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
(2 Corinthians 5:10)

The judgment of Christians will not be a judgment of condemnation.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” **(Romans 8:1)**

The true believer in Christ will never need to be judged at all for the sins he has committed. When a person comes as a sinner in faith to Christ, receiving Him as Saviour and confessing Him as Lord, the whole record of that person’s past sins is immediately and eternally blotted out by God, never to be remembered anymore.

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.” **(Isaiah 43:25)**

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **(1 John 1:9)** “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” **(1 John 2:1-2)**

These two passages teach that if a believer in Christ sins, and thereafter repents and confesses his sin, the record of his sin is erased, and he himself is cleansed from all unrighteousness.

The judgment of Christians will not be in relation to their righteousness, but with their service rendered to Christ. The purpose of the judgment will not be to decide upon either acquittal or condemnation, but rather to assess the reward due to each believer for his service to Christ while on earth.

THE JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS IS TO DETERMINE THEIR REWARDS

“For no other foundation can anyone lay that that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” **(1 Corinthians 3:11-15)**

2) The judgment of the Gentile nations at the close of the great tribulation – Carried out before the throne of Christ’s glory

After Israel has passed through the fires of the great tribulation and been reconciled again to God through Jesus Christ, there will be no further need for God to judge them. Thereafter, when Christ sets up His earthly Kingdom and takes His seat upon the throne of His Glory, He will need only to judge the Gentile nations remaining alive on earth at the close of the great tribulation.

“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.” (Matthew 25:31-33)

The purpose of the judgment that follows is to separate the sheep (those whom God accepts) from the goats (those whom God rejects) The sheep will be received into the Kingdom God has prepared for them – that is, Christ’s millennial kingdom. *The goats will have final, irrevocable judgment pronounced upon them, by which they will be banished into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

These rejected Gentiles will not be sent forth to Sheol or Hades but directly to the place of final punishment of all rebels – the lake of fire. Into this lake the beast – the Antichrist – and his false prophet already will have been cast. **The separation between sheep and goats is based upon one decisive issue: the way in which those people being judged have treated the brothers of Jesus; that is, the Jewish people.** The intervention of the Lord against the Gentile nations persecuting the Jews and His final reconciliation with Israel are described in Zechariah.

“It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:9-10)

Once the sheep have been separated from the Goats, the judgment of the Gentile nations will be complete. All those who are accounted worthy to enter into the period of Christ’s millennial kingdom will have passed through the refining judgments of God. Israel will have been purged in the fires of the great tribulation, whilst at the close of the tribulation; the Gentiles will be purged by Christ’s own direct intervention and judgment.

After these purging judgments upon both Jews and Gentiles, there will ensue a thousand years of peace and prosperity, with Christ ruling as King over all the earth. At the close of this period of one thousand years, Satan will make one final attempt to organize the Gentile nations in rebellion against Christ and His Kingdom, but this rebellion will be brought to nought by the direct intervention of God. **At this time Satan himself will at last be banished forever from earth and will be cast into the lake of fire, to join the Antichrist and the false prophet who will already be there. All the rebellious among those living at that time will be purged out.**

“Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10)

After this the third of the final judgments will commence.

3) The judgment of all the remaining dead at the close of the millennium – Carried out before a great white throne

“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 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.” **(Revelations 20:11-15)**

Here is the ultimate end for those who have sinned and rebelled against the authority and holiness of God: to be cast forever into the lake of everlasting fire. Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life will escape this final judgment. The names recorded in this book are those who during their life on earth availed themselves through repentance and faith, of God’s mercy and grace.

As those who put their faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice will have been resurrected at the commencement of the millennium, and already appeared before the judgment seat of Christ – not for condemnation, but to assess their reward, it seems that the majority of those who appear before the great white throne will ***not*** have fulfilled the conditions for receiving God’s mercy and will therefore be condemned to the lake of fire.

However there will definitely be at least two categories of people before the great white throne who will escape condemnation and enter into eternal life.

The first category will consist of people such as the queen of the South and the men of Nineveh, who availed themselves of the mercy, which God offered to them in one brief but decisive revelation of Himself.

Jesus Himself said, “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.” **(Matthew 12:41-42)**

A second category will consist of all those who died in faith during the millennium.

This study of Hebrews has laid the scriptural foundation of doctrine upon which the faith of every Christian can be firmly built. With these foundations in place, it becomes possible to obey the further exhortation of Hebrews 6:1, “Let us go on to perfection.”