

Question: "What are all the different judgments in the Bible?"

Answer: There are several judgments mentioned in the Bible. Our God is a God of justice, as the psalmist says, “A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom” (Psalm 45:6). It is the Lord Jesus Himself who is the Judge of all the earth: “The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). Jesus alone is worthy to open the scroll (Revelation 5:5). Here is a list of significant judgments in their likely chronological sequence:

Judgments that have already occurred:

The judgment of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14–24). God banished the first couple from the Garden of Eden for violating His clear command not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This judgment affected all of creation (Genesis 3:17–18; Romans 8:20–22).

The judgment of the antediluvian world (Genesis 7:17–24). God sent a worldwide flood in judgment of mankind’s sin in Noah’s time. The flood destroyed all of mankind and the animal world, except for Noah and his family, whose faith led them to obey God’s command to build the ark.

The judgment at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:5–9). Noah’s post-flood descendants remained in one location in defiance of God’s command, so God confused their language, causing them to disperse over the earth.

The judgment of Egypt and their gods (Exodus 7—12). The ten plagues against Egypt at the time of the exodus were “mighty acts of judgment” (Exodus 7:4) against a stubborn, cruel king and an idolatrous people and their gods (Exodus 12:12).

The judgment of believers’ sins (Isaiah 53:4–8). Jesus took this judgment upon Himself by His crucifixion and death. “He suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9). Because our sin was judged at the cross, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). It was also at the cross that God pronounced judgment on the unbelieving world and on the enemy of our souls, Satan. As Jesus said shortly before His arrest, “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out” (John 12:31).

Judgments occurring now in the church age:

Self-evaluation (1 Corinthians 11:28). Believers practice self-examination, prayerfully and honestly assessing their own spiritual condition. The church helps in this endeavor to purify the Body of Christ (Matthew 18:15–17). Self-judgment requires each believer to be spiritually discerning, with a goal of being more like Christ (Ephesians 4:21–23).

Divine discipline (Hebrews 12:5–11). As a father lovingly corrects his children, so the Lord disciplines His own; that is, He brings His followers to a place of repentance and restoration when they sin. In so doing, He makes a distinction between us and the world: “When we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32). Whom Christ loves, He chastens (Revelation 3:19).

Judgments to occur in the future:

The judgments of the tribulation period (Revelation 6—16). These terrible judgments are pictured as seven seals opened, seven trumpets blown, and seven bowls poured out. God’s judgment against the wicked will leave no doubt as to His wrath against sin. Besides punishing sin, these judgments will have the effect of bringing the nation of Israel to repentance.

The judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). Resurrected (and raptured) believers in heaven will be judged for their works. Sin is not in view at this judgment, as that was paid for by Christ, but only faithfulness in Christian service. Selfish works or those done with wrong motives will be burned up (the “wood, hay, and stubble” of 1 Corinthians 3:12). Works of lasting value to the Lord will survive (the “gold, silver, and precious stones”). Rewards, which the Bible calls “crowns” (Revelation 3:11) will be given by the One who is “not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him” (Hebrews 6:10).

The judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31–46). After the tribulation, the Lord Jesus will sit in judgment over the Gentile nations. They will be judged according to their treatment of Israel during the tribulation. This judgment is also called the judgment of the sheep and the goats because of the imagery Jesus uses in the Olivet Discourse. Those who showed faith in God by treating Israel favorably (giving them aid and comfort during the tribulation) are the “sheep” who will enter into the Millennial Kingdom. Those who followed the Antichrist’s lead and persecuted Israel are the “goats” who will be consigned to hell.

The judgment of angels (1 Corinthians 6:2–3). Paul says that Christians will judge angels. We aren’t exactly sure what this means, but the angels facing judgment would have to be the fallen angels. It seems that Satan’s hordes of demons will be judged by the redeemed ones of the Lamb. Some of these demons are already imprisoned in darkness and awaiting judgment, according to Jude 1:6, due to their leaving their proper dwelling place.

The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–15). This final judgment of unbelievers for their sins occurs at the end of the Millennium, before the creation of the new heaven and earth. At this judgment, unbelievers from all the ages are judged for their sins and consigned to the lake of fire.

In Job 8:3, Bildad, one of Job’s friends, asks, “Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?” The answer, of course, is “no.” “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just” (Deuteronomy 32:4), and God’s judgments will make His perfection shine forth in all its glory.

One of the Holy Spirit’s tasks in this world is to convict the world of coming judgment (John 16:8–11). When a person truly understands his sin, he will acknowledge his guilty position before a Holy God. The surety of judgment should cause the sinner to turn to the Savior and cast himself on the mercy of God in Christ. Praise the Lord that, in Christ, “mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13).