

Will Christians Be Judged for Their Sins?

The answer all depends on the question's objective, but Christians facing *judgment* for their sins is altogether different than Christians being *punished* for their sins. And believe it or not, Christians get this idea confused more than anybody else.

There are numerous formal judgment scenes in the Bible, but the one most people think of when they hear the word "judgment" is the Great White Throne judgment. It is found in Chapter 20 of the Revelation of John, starting with verse 11.

This passage talks about the terrible and eternal fate of all whose name will not be found in the book of life. Luckily this passage does NOT refer to Christians, but rather to the unredeemed. This event is one of the very last in the entire Bible, and there are a lot of things still left to happen before that occurs.

There are three big events involving Christians before the Great White Throne judgment takes place. They are:

1. the Rapture (when Christ comes to take the Church from Earth),
2. the trial of the Believers' works (when Christ tests the believers' works by fire and purifies the Church), and
3. the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (when Christ marries his bride, the Church).

Christians often confuse the second of these events with the Great White Throne judgment, which happens a thousand years later.

Here's the trial by fire passage:

1:Cor.3:11-15, "For other foundation can no man lay that that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day will declare it: because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

Please pay extra attention to the last line. This is not about judgment of persons; it is a judgment of the believer's works only.

When I speak on this idea, I use the illustration of our labors on Earth. Everything we do as Christians can be classified as either a gold/silver/precious-stone accomplishment, or a wood/hay/stubble work. And the difference may not be so obvious, either. A small good deed done in secret may withstand the fire test, while something like making a big donation to the church just so others will praise us may not.

In the final analysis, the question of sin has already been dealt with; Christ paid the penalty for all the sins of the world at the cross. This judgment by fire is only about the purity of the Believer's works. So do we get off scot-free when we sin? Hardly.

Sin always sets off a series of negative consequences. Once a seed is planted, it will grow, whether it is a good seed or a bad one. But the Lord has promised to give back the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:24). I believe He will shorten the harvest somewhat so that we reap less trouble than what we really deserve, but that's not going to stop bad stuff from happening as a result of poor or sinful choices.

The outcome of sin is called *justice*, where actions always have consequences. *Redemption* is a whole different ball game.

My Final Answer: Sinning Believers won't face judgment. However, on that day, some of them will be smoking heavily, and not from cigarettes.