

## **The Judgment Seat of Christ**

### **Some random observations concerning that judgment.**

1. It is not a penal judgment. (The dictionary definition of "penal" is: *1. of, for, or constituting punishment, especially legal punishment. 2. Specifying or prescribing punishment: as, a 'penal code'. 3. Making a person liable to punishment, as an offense.*) John 5:24 indicates no penal judgment for believers, even for the saved of Israel, for they have passed from death unto life and shall not come into judgment. Rom. 8:1 assures us that for us also there is no condemnation (penal judgment), for we are in Christ.

2. There will not be, then, the impediments to justice which are present now:

- The judgment will not be based on the laws of men,
- The judgment will be in the hands of Christ, not human lawyers, judge or jury.
- There will be no lack of reliable and full information. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: --" (1 Cor. 4:5)
- There will not be the fleshly responses and reactions which impede justice today, for every one appearing there will be, finally and fully, done with the old nature.
- The interference of Satan and his hosts will be totally missing, nor will he be the prosecutor, as he seeks to be now (Rev. 12:10).
- The influence of the world will be only a historic consideration.

3. There will be no "accusations" for none will be needed. Each one will be tearfully conscious of his sins and failures as a believer and longing with all his heart to "make it right" both with the Lord and other believers he has harmed. "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:11,12), and "then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

4. While there will be tears to shed for our thoughts, deeds and attitudes, there will be no enjoyment in seeing those who have dealt unjustly with us "get what they deserve."! And He will wipe the tears away!

5. While our hearts will be broken over many aspects of our past, we will be comforted in seeing how God was able to work even those things together for good, to make even the "wrath" of believers to praise Him (Psa. 76:10; Gen. 50:20).

6. We will receive rewards, or crowns, for those things done in the Spirit and according to the Word of God. Rewards are consistent with grace:

-- It is our apostle of grace who tells us most of what we know about them.<sup>1</sup> In his very last letter he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept

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<sup>1</sup>Rewards are mentioned in 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 9:17, 18; Col. 2:18; 3:24; 1 Tim. 5:18 -- and two significant passages in Hebrews: Heb. 10:32; 11:6. Crowns are also mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:8.

the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8). He expects a crown will be given to him, evidently at the Judgment Seat of Christ -- for it is as "the righteous judge" He awards it -- and the context indicates it will be given based on his faithful service (v. 7) and the fact that he has loved Christ's appearing (v. 8).

-- The "works" associated with the crowns are not our own "dead works" from which we must be purged (Heb. 9:14), but those works planned for us by the Lord and which are the result of His gracious work in us (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13).

-- The crowns are not given because we have put Him under obligation to us, but because He graciously awards them out of His love for us and appreciation of our love and service for Him. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

-- The incentive of rewards is the gracious alternative to the incentive of fear of punishment linked so closely with the Law.

**7.** We will suffer loss when our service has not been according to His word and His will, nor in the power and direction of the Spirit; for failing to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of us (Phil. 3:13-b); and for failing to walk in the very good works which God prepared for us beforehand (Eph. 2:10). In 1 Cor. 3:13 - 15 the believer does not suffer punishment, he suffers loss (loss of reward). The fire is not for him, it is his works which are burned up.<sup>2</sup>

**8.** This judgment is not to make us fit for heaven. Christ's work on the Cross has done that perfectly and completely. The weakest and most wayward true believer is as "ready for heaven" as was Paul when he wrote Second Timothy. The Bema judgment cannot be to make the believer ready for heaven, for most of those at the Bema will have already been consciously in the presence of Christ in heaven for a long time -- some for over 1900 years -- before the Bema takes place. Rather, it is to enable us, and our brethren, to fully enjoy heaven.

**9.** It is not the penalty for sins, but the consequences of them (how we have offended Christ and the brethren and failed to accomplish what we could have) that will be addressed at that time. David's reaction to the revolt under Absalom is a case in point. See 2 Sam. 16:9 - 11; 18:33. He realized that the death of Absalom was the result of his own sin, part of the fulfillment of 2 Sam. 12: 9, 10. His grief and tears hurt more than if he, himself, had been whipped physically.

**10.** We will be made aware of things we have thought, said and done which have hurt our Savior and our brethren. We will, at last, see the whole picture -- and not with our own welfare in mind. We will not be trying to justify ourselves, but will long passionately to honor Christ and comfort those we have harmed.

**11.** There will be no "chastening" at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

-- It will not be needed, for each will be chastening himself.

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<sup>2</sup>The fire in 1 Cor. 3:13 - 15 is no more literal fire than the buildings consumed are literal wood, hay and stubble.

-- Chastening by the Lord takes place during this life, but is not to prepare us for heaven. The weakest most wayward believer is as ready for heaven as was Paul when he wrote Second Timothy -- for his entrance into heaven is based on imputed righteousness, not his behavior or lifestyle. However, for many reasons, the Lord is deeply concerned with our walk. If the believer judges himself he can avoid chastening, but when he does not judge himself he is judged by the Lord and chastened. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:31, 32).

-- Chastening of the believer serves several purposes, among them the following:

- \* That he should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32). Is Paul saying here that physical death is meted out to a seriously wayward believer so he will not lose his salvation and be under the condemnation of the Great White Throne Judgment? If so, he would be saying that by suffering physical death salvation is retained. This would make his suffering necessary, in addition to the suffering of Christ on the Cross, for his salvation. Also we have the assurance that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). It seems, rather, that he is saying "While, even in the most extreme cases, God will not condemn him as He will the lost at the Judgment of Rev. 20:12 - 15, He will not ignore his sin. He may even cut his earthly life short and take him home."

- \* So the enemies of God will not have a valid basis for blasphemy (2 Sam. 12:14).

- \* To manifest His love to us as His children (Heb. 12:6) and indicate the legitimacy of our sonship (Heb. 12:7, 8).

- \* For our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness, enjoying the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Heb. 12:10, 11).

- \* That we might better serve Him. Paul seems to have experienced this kind of chastening when God gave him a thorn in the flesh. Chastening is not only chastisement, it is whatever is needed to make chaste, to produce character in the child. It is translated "discipline" in some translations. Paul's thorn was preventive discipline (2 Cor. 12:7).

- \* Chastening results in His approval. "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:6).

- \* Chastening is no joke. God can make it hurt. Consider how God chastened Jonah and the nation of Israel. It is not pleasant, but it works (Heb. 12:11).

**12.** Consider what sometimes happens at a great revival. Instead of the wronged ones making accusations and seeking punishment upon the guilty, the guilty are seeking out those they have wronged, with tears pouring down their faces, asking forgiveness -- and being hugged to the offended one's heart in full forgiveness, with tears of joy! The greatest "revival" of this kind will take place at the Bema judgment!

**13.** Consider David. The penalty was not imposed (2 Sam. 12:13 -- death penalty for adultery and murder), but he was severely chastened. The chastening was because he had given the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme (2 Sam. 12:14). But because of the chastening David experienced his enemies could not honestly say, "David sinned grievously but he was not slain. Therefore the Lord is unjust and encourages sin." David's rejoicing even when under severe chastening gave him an effective testimony (Psa. 51:12, 13).

**14.** We must not think lightly of the Bema judgment, however. To do so is to underestimate the value of the rewards we might lose there. They are not merely highly decorated physical headpieces. For instance, the Crown of Rejoicing appears to be the presence in heaven of those we have had a part in winning to Christ (1 Thess. 2:19, 20; Phil. 4:1). What a glorious crown that will be! Whatever the crowns are, they are worth living for, they are even worth dying for! Also if we take the Bema judgment lightly we do not seriously consider the great sorrow of heart we will experience when we face the enormity of some of our actions which have dishonored Christ, hurt our brethren, and even possibly stood in the way of some coming to Christ.

## Motivation for service.

Closely related to the Judgment Seat of Christ is the consideration of motivation for service under grace.

### There are several false motivations:

-- We are not to serve in order to become Christians! (Eph. 2:8, 9). Works done to obtain salvation are "dead works" -- done by one who is dead in trespasses and sin and resulting in continuing spiritual death. Compare Matt. 7:22, 23.

-- We are not to serve in order to remain Christians! This motive would cast doubt on the sufficiency of His work on Calvary, and His continuing work in heaven on our behalf (Phil. 1:6; Heb 7:25). Such "service" is carried on because one doesn't really believe the truth about salvation by grace and, being accomplished in unbelief, it is sin (Rom. 14:23).

-- We are not to serve Him in order to be spiritual. The service He longs to see at our hand flows out of spirituality, it does not produce it (Gal. 3:3).

-- Service is not to result from a struggle for prominence among the believers (Phil. 1:15, 16).

### What are the true incentives offered to us for serving our Lord and Savior?

-- Gratitude for what Christ has done for us (Rom. 12:1, 2).

-- The love of Christ (not, here, our love for Him). He loves the world, for He died for all (2 Cor. 5:14). This constrains us to preach to all.

-- Concern for the lost. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:11). The word translated "terror" in the KJV is the general word for fear. It is used of the "fear" the wife should have of her husband (Eph. 5:33), "The fear of the Jews" (John 19:38 - and elsewhere), "the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21 - and elsewhere), etc. 2 Cor. 5:11 does not suggest that we are to be terror stricken as we face the Judgment Seat of Christ.<sup>3</sup> It means that we persuade men either out of "reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21 -- NIV) or because, even though the lost do

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<sup>3</sup>One pastor in the Philippines taught that there would be a "fiery judgment" in the air, at the Rapture, to prepare us for heaven. He was finally convinced from Scripture that this would be a "protestant purgatory" and that it was not the teaching of Scripture.

not believe in hell, and can laugh and joke about it, we DO know that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31) -- and thus seek to persuade men.<sup>4</sup>

-- The potential we can see, by faith, in the individuals around us (2 Cor. 5:17). Each one we witness to, unpromising as he may appear in the flesh, is a potential brother for eternity (1 Thess. 2:19, 20) and even a potential worker, as were Saul of Tarsus, when he became Paul, and the stammering young man who later, as a believer, led thousands to Christ world-wide -- Dwight L. Moody.

-- The desire to be well pleasing to Him (2 Cor. 5:9).

-- Rewards. This is a legitimate incentive, and is set forth as such by Paul (1 Cor. 3:14; 4:52; Cor. 5:10).

-- The glory of our message and greatness of our responsibility (2 Cor. 5:18 - 21; 6:1 -- and context).

### **A comparison between the believer and unbeliever.**

A vast gulf exists between even the most commendable unbeliever and the weakest, most immature believer. This gulf exists not because of the conduct of either, but because one is "in Christ" and the other is "in Adam."

The unbeliever: believer:	The believer:
1. Is an enemy of God (Rom. 8:7)	1. Has been reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10)
2. Has no peace (Isa. 57:21)	2. Has peace with God (Rom. 5:1)
3. Has not life (Eph. 2:1, 5)	3. Has everlasting life (John 3:36; Eph. 2:1, 5)
4. Is a child of wrath and disobedience (Eph. 2:3)	4. Is a child of God (Rom. 8:16)
5. Has no righteousness (Rom. 3:10)	5. Has no condemnation (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1)
6. Has Satan working in him (Eph. 2:2)	6. Has God working in him (Phil. 2:12)
7. Is without Christ (Eph. 2:12)	7. Is a member of Christ's Body (1 Cor. 12:12, 13)
8. Is in the lap of the wicked one (1 John 5:19)	8. Is in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6)
9. Is in the flesh (Rom. 8:8)	9. Is in the Spirit and indwelt by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9)
10. Is condemned already (John 3:18)	10. Is justified (Rom. 5:1), not condemned (John 3:18), and will not be condemned (Rom. 8:1)

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 10:31, is speaking of the fate of those who willfully reject Christ, knowing the truth (v. 26) -- those who are "adversaries" and are consumed by fire (v. 27). In v. 30 the expression "vengeance is mine, I will repay" is from Deut. 32:35 referring to the wrath to come upon the "enemies" of Deut. 32:31-b - 33. The expression "the Lord will judge His people" is from Deut. 32:36 where it is speaking of Israel and is translated "the Lord will vindicate His people, and have compassion on His servants" (NASB) in contrast to the wrath on their enemies.

11. Has no hope(1 Thess. 4:13)

11. Has a blessed hope(Titus 2:13)

*(Many others could be listed)*

-- William P. Heath Bible Study # 75 <Bible Study\Bema > See Bible Study # 82 <Bible Study\Bema-2 > ( Microsoft Word)  
(< Bibstudy\bema.sam > and < Bibstudy\bema-2.sam > on AmiPro)