

50. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST: How It Will Change Our Behaviour

Bible Reading: II Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12; I Corinthians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:23-25.

Aim: To let the Judgment Seat of Christ change our behaviour now.

Introduction: One day after the Rapture, every Christian must give an account to God of the way he has lived since his salvation. Our Christian lives will be “on display” (made manifest). This will determine **not** our salvation, but the **amount** of rewards we will receive when we get to heaven.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Matthew 6:19,20.

The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a place of:

1) Review – of our life from salvation to death.

It will show if we have lived for Christ and others, or for self.

Question: When Jesus returns, will I have a grudge against a friend?

Question: Will I have left my love for Jesus Christ, the Bible, souls, or the local church?

Question: If Christ came today, how many of the 19 commands in I Thessalonians 5:1,11-22 would I be obeying? “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” (I John 2:28). It is as if God gives us a block of land (foundation of salvation in Christ-3:11) in heaven, but we build the house (12) by our work after salvation.

2) Reward

The Judgment Seat of Christ in Greek is “Bematos tou Xristou” (II Cor. 5:10) known as the Bema Seat.

i) The Meaning of the Bema Judgment: It was a raised platform in the middle of an Olympic arena where the judge sat. After the contests were over, the winners would assemble before the Bema seat to receive their rewards from the judge. It was not a condemning seat, but a reward seat. Losing the race didn’t mean execution, it only meant no reward. The Christian life is a race, and the divine umpire is watching every contestant. After the Church age has finished at the rapture, Christ will gather every Christian before the Bema Seat to examine our life’s work and to give the proper rewards to each.

ii) The Fact of the Bema Judgment.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:10.

iii) The Purpose of the Bema Judgment.

- not to determine whether one enters heaven.
- not to punish believers for sins committed before or after salvation.
(See Psalm 103:10-12; Isaiah 38:17; 44:22; Micah 7:19; Hebrews 8:12).
- to give account to Jesus Christ of how we used our abilities, opportunities and responsibilities from the moment of our salvation. Hence:

- a) In the past, God dealt with us sinners. (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:6-8).
- b) In the present, God deals with us as sons. (Romans 8:14; I John 3:1,2; Hebrews 12:5-11).

c) In the future, God will deal with us (at the Bema Seat) as stewards. (I Corinthians 3:11-15).

iv) The material to be tested at the Bema Judgment.

At salvation, Christ becomes our foundation. (I Corinthians 3:11).

After salvation, we must build on this foundation. (I Corinthians 3:12-15).

God classifies believers works into 2 groups:

a) Those of **indestructible** and **eternal** value described as:

- gold = the trial of our faith (I Peter 1:7).
- silver = wisdom gained, favour with God (Proverbs 2:4; 3:14; 8:10; 22:1; Malachi 3:3).
- precious stones = souls won to Christ (Malachi 3:16,17).

b) Those **destructible** and **useless activities** of no eternal value are described as wood, hay and stubble. (I Corinthians 3:12-15).

Question: For what actions will we be rewarded at the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ?

- 1) How well we treat other believers. Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 10:41,42.
- 2) How well we submit to authority and exercise authority over others. Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1.
- 3) How well we use our God-given abilities. I Peter 4:10; Luke 19:11-26; Matthew 25:14-29.
- 4) How well we use our money. I Timothy 6:17-19; I Corinthians 9:6,7.
- 5) How much we suffer for Jesus. Matthew 5:11,12; 10:29,30; I Peter 4:12,13; 2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18.
- 6) How well we use our time. Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5; I Peter 1:17.
- 7) How well we run the particular race God chooses for us. Philippians 2:16; 31:13,14; I Cor. 9:24.
- 8) How well we control the old nature. I Corinthians 9:25-27.
- 9) How many people we witness to and win for Christ. Proverbs 11:30; I Thess. 2:19,20; Daniel 12:3.
- 10) How well we react to trials and temptations. James 1:2,3; Revelations 2:10.
- 11) How much we love the doctrine of Christ’s return. II Timothy 4:8.
- 12) How faithful we are to God’s Word and to feeding the flock of God. I Peter 5:2-4.

v) The Results of the Bema judgment:

a) Some will receive rewards. (I Cor. 3:14). 5 crowns may be abilities we receive to glorify Christ.

b) Some will suffer loss. (I Cor. 3:15).

vi) What determines whether we receive a reward?

a) QUALITY: “of what sort it is.” (I Cor. 3:11-15 esp. v.13).

Would you prefer a handful of gold or a truckload of hay?

b) MOTIVE: Jesus may ask “Why did you serve Me?” To be seen of men (Matthew 6:1,2,5) or for:

- Love for Christ. II Cor. 5:14,15.
- Love for others. II Cor. 5:11.
- Our works are to be judged. II Cor. 5:10.

c) We will be rewarded for WHAT WE ATTEMPTED. Matthew 25:21.

Did you invite anyone to church? Did you tell anyone how to be saved? God calls us to be obedient and faithful.

3) Re-evaluation = to calculate the value of my life’s effort again. Many things that seem big and important to us now, will seem small and worthless in heaven.

eg: The widow who gave 2 mites (2 x ¼ cents) gave more than the rich men.

“for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Luke 12:48.

You are talented. God expects you to use your talents, not waste them.

4) Recognition = Many nobodies on earth now, will be somebodies in heaven.
Many somebodies on earth now, will be nobodies in heaven.
The rich man and the beggar Lazarus were reversed in status in eternity.

5) Regret of a life misspent and of opportunities wasted. If you don't abide in Christ you'll be ashamed. I John 2:28. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." II John 8.
"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Revelation 3:11.
The worldly minded, lazy, selfish Christian at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be very regretful.

6) Rejoicing of great rewards received by some. I Thessalonians 2:19,20.
"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27.
"Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

Challenge:

- a) Christian: Have you been living for Christ? Have you got sin or resentment in your life that you'd be ashamed of if you saw Christ today? Raise your hand if you need to get right with God?
- b) Lost: Maybe you're not sure you are saved. You're not sure you'd go to heaven. You're not sure you know Christ as your Saviour and Friend. You will have no reward except hell, because the wages of sin is death. If you'd like to be saved, raise your hand and come out in the invitation so you can see how you may be saved.

I Corinthians 3:14-17 has 3 kinds of builders:

- i) The wise builder (3:14) = the studying, soul winning, Spirit-filled Christian.
- ii) The worldly builder (3:15) = the carnal Christian.
- iii) The wicked builder (3:17) = the unsaved.

Question: To which group do you belong?