

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### JROC – The Judgment Seat of Christ/The BEMA

4/8/18

Following the rapture, the judgment seat of Christ will take place in heaven while the Tribulation transpires on earth. The judgment seat of Christ is for believers only.

II Cor. 5:10 - *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.* <sup>10</sup> *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.* After the Church is removed from the world at the rapture, the “judgment seat of Christ” will take place in heaven. Believers, when standing before the judgment seat of Christ, will be judged according to their works. This judgment does NOT determine whether they are saved or lost. That has already been determined. They are already in heaven – not on their own merit or works, but on the ground of divine grace through Jesus alone.

Paul uses the Greek word *bema* to describe this judgment. A *bema* was a seat or raised platform where a Judge sat as he made his decision regarding a case (Matt. 27:19; Jn. 19:13; Acts 18:12). *Bema* was also used in connection with the platform on which the referee sat during the Olympic games or at the Isthmian games at Corinth. This was the place where the winners of the various events received their rewards. The judgment seat of Christ will be a place of rewarding, not punishing.

Rev. 22:12 - *And behold, I am coming quickly (in the rapture), and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.* The fact that Jesus will reward believers in connection with His coming indicates that the judgment seat will occur shortly after the rapture. How significant that among the final words of Revelation we find Jesus words regarding rewards!

When Jesus returns to the earth at His physical Second Coming with His bride, the Church, the bride has already been rewarded since Jesus is wearing many crowns Rev. 19:11-12 - *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.* <sup>12</sup> *His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.* In Rev. 4:10 we see the 24 elders who represent the Church in the throne room of God casting their crowns, their rewards, before the throne.

II Cor. 5:9-10 - <sup>10</sup> *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.*

The judgment seat appears to be a private meeting between individual believers and Jesus. This judgment will determine the reward or loss of reward for service on the part of each individual believer.

I Corinthians 3:9-15 – *For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.* <sup>10</sup> *According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take*

heed how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. God rewards the believer for works that "endure."

Within the church today there is considerable confusion and debate regarding the judgment seat of Christ. A common misconception regarding the judgment seat of Christ is that God will distribute a just retribution for sins in the believer's life. NO! The judgment seat of Christ is rather a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how one has used his or her life for the Lord after coming to faith in Jesus.

As believers in Jesus, our home in heaven is reserved for us and we are kept by the power of God. (READ I Pet. 1:3-5) Those who are genuinely born-again/saved will not lose their salvation! Our salvation is not based on works. Because we have been given salvation, Peter continued to write...

#### I PETER 1:13-17

**THEREFORE**, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>14</sup> as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; <sup>15</sup> but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

If we know nothing about the rewards that Scripture teaches, when we come across Bible passages like I Peter 1:13-17, what are we to think? Too frequently passages which speak clearly about the possibility of future loss are wrongly interpreted to refer to the loss of salvation. They are, rather, speaking about the loss of future reward. Consider I John 2:28 - *And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.* What would cause shame? II John 1:4-8 – not receiving a full reward due to not walking according to the truth of God's word.

#### Re: I Peter 1:13-17:

- Because we have been given salvation through grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, we need to gird up the loins of our minds. This refers to the ancient practice of gathering up one's robes when needing to move quickly. In this passage Peter is speaking about our thought process because he mentions girding up the loins of our "minds." Peter is telling us to pull in all those loose ends of our thinking and focus on the future grace of God at the revelation of Jesus. Calling on the Father indicates that we have a relationship with Him. And He will judge without partiality, not showing favoritism. We need to look at the word *fear* in I Pet. 1:17. It is the Gk. word "phobos"

which can mean fear, dread, terror. It can also mean reverence. Let's look at the context. Because Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has written in the very beginning of this letter that believers in Jesus have a close and intimate relationship with God, we, as believers, do not dread Him as a stern judge of sinners, but believers revere him as their reconciled and loving Father!

WHY are we studying the judgment seat of Christ? We, as believers, have a responsibility to understand what God has told us in His word. We are told about the judgment seat of Christ because, firstly, it will occur! We are told about standing before Jesus face-to-face at the Bema seat so that it will change the way we live here and now. Consider: since the rapture of the Church can occur at any moment, we could each be standing in front of Jesus sooner than we think as the judgment seat of Christ occurs soon after the rapture of the Church. As students of the Word of God, God will hold us accountable in knowing Who He is and how He wants us to live. Regarding Who God is, we need to know that God is not only a Judge but He is also a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6)!

The judgment seat of Christ concerns what we have done on earth since the time we came to faith in Jesus. The life lived before our new birth will not be the subject of the evaluation as we had no ability to engage in works that would bring glory to God. Before our salvation there was no ability to "abide in Christ" or to draw upon the Holy Spirit's enabling power which is essential for works of any value (Jn. 15:4-5). As believers, the sinful deeds which we confess (I John 1:9) and gain victory over here and now will not have the influence that unconfessed sins will have at the judgment seat. Moving forward before He comes for us, we need to ask God to reveal to us our sinful deeds and words so that we may confess them, so that our fellowship with Him may be ongoing and sweet!

According to I John 2:28 - *And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.* There will be believers who will have confidence when Jesus appears. There will be believers who will be ashamed at when He appears. Those having confidence will NOT have lived in sinless perfection. Those believers having confidence will have remained in fellowship with the Lord, having confessed their sins to Him... during our time on earth since coming to know Jesus.

How will God deal with us?

God is a righteous Judge

Gen. 18:25 - Abraham said, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

Psa. 89:14 - *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.*

James 1:17-18 - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

<sup>18</sup> *Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.*

God will judge believers fairly

Matt. 20:1-16 – the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Those who enter the Lord's service later in life can receive the same reward as the workers who have been laboring in God's service longer.

God will judge believers thoroughly

I Cor. 4:5 – God will bring to *light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.*

God will judge believers impartially

God does not show favoritism. Romans 2:11 - *God does not show favoritism. All are equal before Him.* Ephesians 6:9 - *There is no favoritism with Him.* Colossians 3:25 teaches God's fairness in judgment: *Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.*

James 3:1 - *God has a stricter standard for those who teach God's word - My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

What about the believer in Jesus?

When we come to faith in Jesus, we have a new relationship. Eph. 2:1 - *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* With this new relationship, we are given new responsibilities. II Cor. 5:17 – *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

As a child of God (Jn. 1:12), we are now stewards of gifts, resources, and the empowerment from the Holy Spirit given to us by God. As believers in Jesus we are responsible to God in a unique way which God spells out in Scripture. The Bible plainly spell out God's criteria for our evaluation.

The primary criteria...

- How closely our lives and our service for Jesus, since coming to faith in Him, have been aligned to the truth of God in His word. Paul was addressing the believers at the church in Corinth (I Cor. 1 & 2) regarding their hurtful behavior. These believers lacked love and the wisdom of God. They operated in the wisdom of man which led to wrong thinking, sinful actions, and questionable decisions. They needed to live according to God's wisdom which we find in His truth in Scripture. How are we each conducting our lives as believers. On what are we basing our beliefs which will affect how we live? Does our personal experience trump the authority of the word of God? Is our personal experience higher on the list than the word of God? The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the NT to address false teaching that was coming into the church in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century! We read of false teaching (teaching NOT based on the Bible) impacting believers – hindering them in their walk with and service for the Lord (the Corinthian church) (Acts 20:28-30; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:1-13; II Pet. 2:1-22; I John 2:18-27; I John 4:1-6; Jude 1-25)

II John 1:4-8 - *I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.*<sup>5</sup> *And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the*

beginning: that we love one another. <sup>6</sup> This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. <sup>8</sup> Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

Another criteria re: the believer's being judged at the Bema:

- How faithful we have been regarding stewardship of what we've been given by God. A stewardship is an administrator of his master's estate. How are we administering God's plan in this world? A steward is highly trusted and as a steward is in charge of that which belongs to his/her Master! The most significant requirement for a steward is to faithfully handle all that the Master has given him. I Cor. 4:2 - *Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*

I Cor. 3:10 – we are given the grace of God. We have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the responsibilities that God has given us:

Eph. 2:10 - *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Phil. 2:12-13 - *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

The truth of the word of God includes His wisdom and love for others.

Rom. 5:5 - *the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.* Are we loving others?

Rom. 9:15 – God has blessed us according to His mercy. Are we extending mercy to others?

At the moment of his/her salvation, each believer is given at least one spiritual gift at the Holy Spirit's discretion (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:1-30; Eph. 4:7-16; I Pet. 4:10-11). The purpose of spiritual gifts is to benefit others – for the equipping of the saints/fellow believers for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:12). We have been given these gifts to affect maturity in other believers (I Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-16) and to guard other believers from sin and failure (Heb. 3:12-13; Heb. 10:23-25). The Church is the “body” of Christ. “Body” – which emphasizes the interdependence of believers to one another.

Each believer has his own unique stewardship responsibility since each one is uniquely entrusted with abilities, gifts, and opportunities (Matt. 25:14-23; Luke 19:11-19; Jn. 21:22).

We are also responsible in the area of money and material possessions (Matt. 6:19-33; Luke 16:1-13; II Cor. 8:1-15; II Cor. 9:6-15; Gal. 6:6-10; I Tim. 4:4-5; I Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19). God has given us time.

Scripture encourages us to budget our time and use it wisely (Psa. 90:10-12; Prov. 27:1; Eph. 5:15-17; James 4:13-17).

God gives us divine opportunities. Paul teaches that believers, as ambassadors of Christ, have been given the ministry of reconciliation. We are to share the Gospel of salvation with those who are not believers (II Cor. 5:17-21).

Relationships that God has given us must be guided by Biblical principles of love, kindness, and forgiveness.

A third primary criteria...

- Motives! Why do we do what we do?

I Cor. 4:5 - God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will reveal the motives of men's hearts. God alone sees those matters that are unseen to people including our motives.

Some motives are clearly wrong - ministering for personal gain (II Cor. 2:17); ministering to promote ourselves, for recognition, for the spotlight! (Phil. 1:15-16).

Godly motivation

II Cor. 5:14 – *the love of Christ compels us*. Compels – pressure which causes action.

II Cor. 5:18-20 - God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ. God is pleading to a lost world through us: "Be reconciled to God." This must be our message to those who are not believers.

I Cor. 10:31 - *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*. The overarching motive must be for the glory of God.

The NT gives us three pictures which help us understand the judgment seat of Christ. We are given in Scripture the example of:

- A builder
- A steward
- An athlete

A Builder

I Cor. 3:8b-15 - *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.* <sup>10</sup> *According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.* <sup>11</sup> *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* <sup>12</sup> *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,* <sup>13</sup> *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.* <sup>14</sup> *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures (if the work has lasting effect, eternal value), he will receive a reward.* <sup>15</sup> *If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

- We are God's fellow-workers! God uses us (II Tim. 2:21).
- God's work does not negate the individual's responsibility to labor diligently according to what the Scripture teaches.
  - Each believer is involved in building for God while they are on earth having been given spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:5-8; I Cor. 12:5-11; Eph. 4:7; I Pet. 4:10-11) and the word of God to learn and live by.
  - In this passage the question is not whether we are involved in building...the question is what kind of building materials are we using (I Cor. 3:8-10).

- Paul warns us that each of us must “be careful how he builds upon” the foundation which is Jesus. Two types of building materials are noted in this passage. Are we building with wood, hay, and straw/stubble (indicative of inferior quality)? Or are we building with gold, silver, and precious stones (superior quality)? What would be acceptable to God? No third option is presented.

- Fire will test the quality of each man’s work. “Fire” in Scripture oftentimes represents judgment. Fire is seen in Scripture as a purifier (Mal. 3:2-3).

- To the one whose work shall *endure* (remains; abides; to last; having eternal value), he shall receive a reward. If the believer’s work is burned (does not endure), the believer will suffer loss. BUT, the believer himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. No reward is mentioned for the one whose works are burned.

### A Steward

*I Cor. 4:1-5 - Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. <sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> 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.*

God owns everything. We are stewards of the Lord’s gifts. At the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus will evaluate how we used the time given us, treasures and talents He entrusted to us. How faithful were we with what we were given? God will evaluate our faithfulness not our “success.” For God, “success” is faithfulness.

How glorious to hear Jesus words, *‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’* (Matt. 25:21).

### An Athlete

*I Corinthians 9:24-27* - the picture of a race and winning the prize is used to reveal the quality of Christian life and service.

- Paul likens Christian service to a race in which all believers are running, and, as in a foot race, only one receives the prize.

- In service, the believer should exert all his strength that he may obtain his full reward.

- To compete as an athlete, one must be temperate – exhibit self-control. An athlete must refuse things that may hinder the pursuit of his goal. Paul’s self-control is seen in the fact that he kept his own body under subjection – not wishing to be disapproved by some unworthy and half-hearted service. The word “disqualified” (v. 27) – disapproved; benched; put on the shelf; no use to the Master (II Tim. 2:21). Since Paul’s salvation was NOT in question, he was not fearful of being separated from God. He was concerned about being disapproved in the sphere of service...not being used of God.

II Cor. 5:9-10 - *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.* <sup>10</sup> *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.* Some teach that *bad* means worthless/useless (“phaulon” in the Gk) The Gk word in Strong’s Concordance is “kakos” which means troublesome, destructive! This could imply the result of works which do not endure, which do not have eternal value. “Good” – (“agathos” in Gk) useful; excellent; honorable. “Good” or “bad” is a distinction. We’ve already noted in I Cor. 3:14 the distinction regarding receiving rewards: that which endures and that which does not endure.

The Bible promises us rewards. God gives us salvation; it is a gift. He rewards us for works that “endure,” that have eternal value (I Cor. 3:14). God graciously supplies the means by which we may serve Him.

Phil. 2:12-13 - *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;* <sup>13</sup> *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.* The decision to serve, and the diligence employed in doing so, are our responsibility and our contribution and God sees this as rewardable.

Colossians 1:29 – Paul wrote - *To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

Eph. 2:10 - *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

The believer’s reward is sometimes labeled as a “prize” (I Cor. 9:24) and sometimes as a “crown” (I Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19; II Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; I Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11).

Commendation from Jesus - “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Co-rulership with Jesus – II Tim. 2:12

Crowns:

- Crown of rejoicing – I Thess. 2:19 – given to faithful soul-winners
- Crown of righteousness – II Tim. 4:8 – given to those who love His appearing
- Crown of life – James 1:12; Rev. 2:10 – given to those who faithfully endure and persevere under the trials of life
- Imperishable/incorruptible crown – I Cor. 9:24-27 – given to those who run the race faithfully, consistently practicing self-discipline and self-control
- Crown of glory – I Peter 5:4 – given to those who feed the flock and watch over them and love them; appears to be given to Pastors, Elders, and leaders who lovingly and faithfully shepherd God’s people.

We will cast our crowns at the feet of Jesus (Rev. 4:10).

Failures in life when repented of, do not eliminate the possibility of significant reward at the judgment seat.



### King David

- We know of King David's immoral activity with Bathsheba. David's adultery was willfully entered into with full knowledge on his part (II Sam. 11:1-5). Additionally David initiated a plan to have Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, die in battle. He added a murder conspiracy to his adultery. Both murder and adultery were crimes punishable by death in Israel.
- Scripture tells us that David's heart was "wholly devoted to the Lord his God" (I Kings 11:4). God declared, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22 quoting from I Sam. 13:14). How is this possible?
- David repented of his sin. Psalm 51:1-4 - *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. <sup>3</sup> For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. <sup>4</sup> Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.*
- David's reward: While Jesus will be the reigning King over earth during the Millennial Kingdom, David will have a prominent place of rulership in the Messiah's kingdom (Eze. 34:23-24; Eze. 37:24-25).

### Peter

- Peter denied Jesus three times.
- Peter wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75). While tears are not conclusive evidence of genuine repentance, Jesus said that Peter would fail but would turn again (Luke 22:32).
- After His resurrection, it is noted that Jesus appeared to Peter specifically (Luke 24:34).
- Peter's reward: John 21:15-19 – read the exchange between Jesus and Peter after Jesus' resurrection at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus commissioned Peter to feed His sheep, to tend His sheep, and to follow Him! And, Jesus told Peter about the death he, Peter, would die because of his testimony for his Lord!

God sees the contrite heart and knows whether a person has confessed and repented. God is clearly open to giving reward(s) to such a person. There is hope for the believer who has been involved in practicing sin...through repenting and turning to a life of faithful obedience to Jesus. These examples in Scripture should not, however, give comfort to one who continues to live carelessly, selfishly, and in ignorance of the word of God. The believer is warned about losing his reward (Col. 2:18; II John 8; Rev. 3:11).

Preparing for the judgment seat of Christ

II Pet. 1:5-11 - *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, <sup>6</sup> to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, <sup>7</sup> to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. <sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

<sup>10</sup> *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

An abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of God – being confident – having lived a life abiding in Christ!

## LIFE IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

The probability is that faithful service on earth will be rewarded by a privileged place of service in heaven.

- Rev. 22:3 – “His servants shall serve Him.”
- Dan. 7:27 – *Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. Man will be given dominion and will rule with Christ and serve and nurture the world.*
- Parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) – we are told about the man receiving five talents and the man receiving two talents, both of whom doubled what they had been given by their lord. They were told, *Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.* (Matt. 25: 21, 23)
- We know from Scripture that the Church will be residing in the Millennial Kingdom. In II Tim. 2:12, the Church is told, “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”