

What Is The Judgment Seat of Christ?

The Scriptural teaching on the Judgment Seat of Christ is one of the most neglected truths needed in the body of Jesus Christ. A great deal of the difficulties that Christians have -- and problems that church bodies struggle with -- comes from a lack of a knowledge concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The purpose of this study is the attempt to give a Scriptural teaching of this important truth as God has given it to us in His Word.

When most people think of God's "*judgment*" they think of the Great White Throne Judgment. The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment are not the same!

Let's look, first, at the Great White Throne Judgment as given in Revelation 20:11-15, "*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

The Bible nowhere teaches a "*General Judgment,*" where all men, saved and unsaved, are judged at the same time. Note verse 6 of this 20th chapter of revelation, "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*"

Scripture teaches that the first resurrection has three parts:

[See my study on "*What Happens When You die?*"]

The 1st part of the first resurrection is found, among other places, in 1 Corinthians 15:20 "*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*" This refers to those who were raised when Jesus descended into Paradise and moved led them to the third Heaven.

The 2nd part is found in the same chapter, verse 23, "*But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming -- Referring to the main body of believers who are raised from the dead at the Rapture of the Church.*

The 3rd part is given in verse 24, "*Then cometh the end -- [or, "end ones"] -- when He [Christ Jesus] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*" This is a promise given to the Tribulation saints.

Revelation 20:4-6 tells of this event "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his*

*image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead [the wicked] lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This** [see not following this printed Scripture] is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."*

The "this," in the later part of verse 5 is simple saying that, with these tribulation saints resurrection, the last part of the first resurrection is complete.

The last part of the three parts of the first resurrection – the tribulation saints – includes all of the saints, from righteous Abel, to all born-again believers – all those who "die in Christ."

The second resurrection includes all the wicked dead of all ages, and takes place a thousand years after the third part of the first resurrection -- (making the first resurrection complete) -- after Christ millennial [1000 years] reign on earth.

[See Revelation 20:11-15 on precious page]

All saints who have "fallen asleep in Christ" – [that is, "Died and gone to Paradise, or the third heaven"] -- together with all living saints must appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ -- that precedes the Great White Throne by a thousand years.

1 Peter 4:17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

No one is lost at the Judgment Seat of Christ! Only the saved will appear here and none will be cast out. At the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be those who are "saved as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).

I believe it is helpful to understand just what happens at this Judgment Seat of Christ, when we realize that the word translated, "judgment" is not the same word renders as "judgment" other places in God's Word. The original Greek word is "Bema" – the "Bema Seat of Christ," is a more correct translation of the word.

The "Bema" seat was the bench that judges of an athletic contest sat to "judge" – or, better, to reward, those who were worthy to be awarded.

The Judgment Seat of Christ has nothing to do with the eternal salvation of a soul. Salvation comes only by the grace of God, as a free gift, through our personal faith in Jesus Christ. As is clearly revealed in the following Scriptures:

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

2 Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Titus 3:3-8, *“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*”

The Judgment Seat of Christ has every thing to do with how we use the gifts of God, or how our will has permitted the will of God to work through us. It has to do with such things as stewardship, faithfulness, and the motives behind our Christian service.

Every Christian must stand before Christ at this Judgment Seat of Christ.

Revelation 1:12-18 gives a picture of Christ judging the Church -- John writes, *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*

Here is a picture of Christ - the Judge! John who knew Jesus when He was here on earth -- he had been with Him night and day for three and one-half years -- but, now sees Him as the Judge of the Church! And John was told to take this “Revelation” and send it -- not to the unbelievers -- but to the seven churches, that represented this present Church Age, that they “*might know the things which shall be hereafter!*”

We see an example of Christ -- as Judge -- judging a church in Revelation 3:1-3, *“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”*

Notice that every act and work done will be revealed and judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. **What a revelation that will be!**

You will notice also that Christ offers repentance to His church, because He is still the High Priest, in the presence of God for them -- *and still is today!* But the time will come when Christ will move into His position as Judge of the church!

“Isn’t it better to live in this present life than in Heaven?”

Think of it -- As long as Jesus remains sitting at the Father’s right hand -- our High Priest -- in the presence of God interceding for us, our life can be improved. As long as the Holy Spirit is here moving within the Church during this present time, ready to help us, ready to make available to us all that Christ purchased for us on the cross, our life can be changed! Once He becomes the Judge, we will not be able to make any changes in our life!

Those who have “in Christ” and are in Paradise, in the third heaven, cannot do anything about changing themselves, nor can they do, or undo the things they left behind. They have been “set in a mold” by the harvest and now must remain in that state until the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Many things can be made different as long as we are in this present life. But only if we are willing -- we must will them to be! If we are willing to adjust, to repent and to remember what we have heard and received, we, by the help of the Holy Spirit, can change!

One Scripture that should help us to understand what the apostle Paul teaches concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ is found in 1 Corinthians 4:4-5, “For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 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: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

Notice that verse 2 of this same chapter says, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man **be found faithful**.” Actually Paul says throughout this passage – that it isn’t really important how others judge you, but when it comes to faithfulness, the One that will judge you is the Lord.

A minister, studying for a Sunday message, being exhausted, fell asleep. He dreamed he had gone before the Judgment Seat of Christ as was shown the materials of his life’s work:

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| 1. False doctrines 7 parts | 10. Pride of talents 11 parts |
| 2. Conduct related to others... 8 parts | 11. Love of authority <u>8 parts</u> |
| 3. Envy 9 parts | Wood, hay, stubble 93 parts* |
| 4. Strife 7 parts | |
| 5. Divisions 8 parts | 12. Love of God 4 parts |
| 6. Bigotry 7 parts | 13. Love of man <u>3 parts</u> |
| 7. Personal ambition 10 parts | Gold, silver, pr. stones ...7 parts* |
| 8. Love of praise 8 parts | |
| 9. Pride of denomination . . . 10 parts | |

*Total analysis of one hundred parts: 93% wood, hay, stubble which will be burned up in the test of fire and no reward given; 7% gold, silver, and precious stones which will abide the test of fire and be rewarded (James 1:2-4, 12 & 1Peter 1:7).

This minister felt that God was showing him that his pure zeal, in the eyes of God, was *only* 7 parts of the 100 percent, while 93 parts were unacceptable before the real eternal Judge. However, since he was still alive, there was opportunity to make some changes, but after death no changes are possible.

Here in this present life, our outward life can be so different than the real hidden motive of our heart. However, in heaven, throughout eternity, there will not be the continuation of hiding and covering heart motives by outside manifestations and camouflage. The Judgment Seat of Christ will bring the hidden things to light, and make known the motives of the heart.

1 Corinthians 4:5 says, *“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**: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*

Another interesting Scripture concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ is found in Romans 14:10-13, *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 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.** Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.”*

Every one of us will give an account of himself to God! We will give an account of our relationship in the family of God. The way we have judged our brother, or sister, in Christ Jesus – whether we’ve been kind or severely cruel in our criticism in our judgment of others – we will give an account, if unconfessed and unrepented of.

When the piercing eyes of Jesus searchers our inner most being, 1 John 2:28 tells us that there will be those who will be ashamed of Christ when they meet Him, This verse reads, *“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.”*

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 warns us, *“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. 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. 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.”*

Paul reveals why he labored so diligently to do God’s will in all his labor for Christ Paul did not have to “labor” as a Christian to get to heaven, or to be saved, for salvation is not of works or labor but is the gift of God. He desired to please his Lord, to live as though the Lord was there beside him and to so live at all times that what he was doing would be accepted of Christ Jesus. This same purpose will make any Christian labor and work -- to live ones life on earth always in the light and vision of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Paul states that Christ was the foundation and that every Christian worker is to build on that foundation.

A builder, year ago, went into bankruptcy and lost all that he had. One day he was called into the office of a millionaire, who told him that he would like to help him. The millionaire asked him to build for him the best house he could. His bank account would be open unto him so that he would not have to stop for any need of money. He expressed his confidence in his ability as a contractor to build his house. As the contractor left the office, he thought to himself, *“Now’s my chance to get on my feet again. Instead of building the best house I can, I’ll build it cheap. I’ll use cheap materials and charge for expensive materials, I’ll collect a high price for the cheap work, I’ll just do enough to get by and when it is all over I’ll have enough money to start back into business and no one will ever know the difference. And if they ever do, it will be too late for anyone to do anything about it.”*

So, when he laid the foundation, he mixed just enough material to stick together. So it was with the wall, floors, the ceilings, and the entire house. He skimped here and there, wherever he could, and covered things over so they could not be noticed. The woodwork and the windows were hurriedly and carelessly done.

A good carpenter, an expert contractor, or professional builder would be able to see that the job had been done quickly, just to get it over, and would not be happy with it, but, to the ordinary man, it might have looked alright.

Finally, it was done and he rushed to the rich man’s office to collect his fee. He said, *“Your house is built.”* The man looked at him and said, *“So, soon?”* The contractor said, *“You see I am a real genius contractor, it’s my trade.”* The man said, *“Fine!”* Then he pulled out a drawer in his desk, and drew out a deed for the house and the land. He put his seal on the deed, handed it to the contractor, and said, *“Sir, after hearing of your loss and knowing your need, out of my heart of love, I wanted to do something for you. I am giving you this gift. The house that you built is your house from now on, the place you will live in.”*

Remorse, of course, filled the contractor’s heart, as he rushed out of the office, thinking, *“What a fool I’ve been.”* He had to live with his own work, in the house he had built -- remembering what he had done, the cheap work and shoddy, inferior material he had used; the careless and unfinished labor -- always remembering that it could have been a mansion of delight, if he had only known! When the wind blew, he knew what was not there; when the storms appeared he knew what was missing in the building materials of the house; when the floods washed about his house, he knew what he had not done to prevent damage.

Christ is the foundation of our salvation -- but, *“Let every man take heed how he builds thereupon”* (1 Corinthians 3:10).

1 Corinthians 3:12, states, *“**NOW** if any man build , , , ”* This verse speaks of NOW, this present life -- Our golden opportunity of earthly living; this better place than Heaven for us NOW. So much of God’s will is left undone, or unfinished in so many lives of Christians, it seems.

Paul mentions that we can produce six kinds of works in this life before we go to heaven. They are gold, silver, precious stones -- or -- wood, hay, and stubble. Just what does this mean?

[I want to deal with these kinds of works in future lessons]