

PROPHECY OVERVIEW
"Part IV: The Believer Before Christ's 'Bema' Seat Judgment"
(2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) We believe that once one has believed Jesus Christ as his personal Savior from sin, he is eternally secure in his salvation. As John 5:24 states of Jesus' words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

However, the Apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "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."

That creates a problem for some: they wonder, "If we are saved from God's condemnation when we believed the Gospel of Christ, how come we must all still stand before the 'judgment seat of Christ?' How does the CHRISTIAN have yet to be JUDGED?"

(2) When I was young, I remember hearing a preacher or teacher, I don't remember which, say that when the Church is raptured and stands before Christ, that He will play back our lives like a movie in front of the **whole CHURCH!** That way, **everything** we ever thought, said or did in the Christian life will be there for everyone **else** to see! That horrified me!

Well, is the "judgment seat of Christ" like some "Protestant purgatory" where BELIEVERS in HEAVEN will go through dreadful humiliation and trauma in front of the entire Body of Christ as their sins are all laid out on the movie screen?

What is the "judgment seat of Christ," WHY will it occur, and WHEN? Is there some way we Christians can KNOW how we are doing as GOD sees us so that we can ADJUST for that judgment?!

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section as follows . . .)

Need: "I heard that even we CHRISTIANS will stand before God for evaluation. Does this mean Christians can be punished after this life? What is this 'judgment' like, and how can we BRACE for it?!"

- I. **Christ's Judgment of the believer occurs IN HEAVEN and AFTER the Rapture but BEFORE Christ's Second Coming to the earth.**
 - A. Paul predicted every Christian will be judged by Christ, 2 Cor. 5:10.
 - B. This event occurs between the Rapture and Christ's Second Coming:
 1. At the judgment of the believer, Christ destroys the Christian's godless works that were done in his Christian life, 1 Cor. 3:13-15a.
 2. Well, when the Church returns to earth with Christ at His Second Coming, its godless works have been cleansed away, Rev. 19:7-21.
 - a. Christ's Second Coming to earth at the end of the Tribulation is called the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb", Rev. 19:9; 19:17-21.
 - b. The Bride of the Lamb, the Church (cf. Eph. 5:30-32) will have had her garments, representing the **deeds** of believers, cleansed **before** that Second Coming of Christ to the earth, Rev. 19:7-8.
 3. Thus, Christ's judgment of the Believer comes **after** the **Rapture** when the believer is in heaven and **before** Christ's **Second Coming**.
- II. **This 'Judgment' does NOT determine the destiny of one's soul, but functions as an AWARDS CEREMONY for Christian WORKS:**
 - A. The Greek word for "judgment seat" in 2 Cor. 5:10 is *bema*, the **athletic competitor's** judge's seat, or a seat of a *courtroom judge*, see UBS Grk. N.T., p. 630; Thayer, Thayer's Grk.-Eng. Lex., p. 101.
 - B. This "*bema* seat" will **not** determine the **destiny** of the believer's **soul**:
 1. Once one believes in Christ, he passes from judgment of the soul into eternal life never again to be under condemnation, John 5:24.
 2. Also, Paul revealed that though a Christian were to see **all** of his Christian life's **works condemned** by Christ in this "bema seat" judgment, his **SOUL** would **still be saved**, 1 Corinthians 3:15.
 - C. What **WILL** be evaluated is the **quality** of one's **Christian works**, 1 Cor. 3:13 [where "sort" (KJV) and "quality" (NIV), from *hopoion* means "quality," Ibid., UBS Grk. N.T., p. 584; Ibid., Thayer, p. 449].
 - D. Believers will receive **rewards** for works done **well**, 1 Cor. 3:8, 14.
- III. **So that one can PREPARE for this evaluation, Scripture reveals the following STANDARDS by which God will examine believers:**
 - A. Christ will approve believers if they used the **power** of the Holy Spirit as **opposed** to that of their sinful natures, Gal. 5:16-23; Rom. 8:6.

- B. Christ will approve believers if they served God by using **His personally assigned spiritual gifts** in **God's job location** assignment, **NOT** in their doing **their own** or **another party's** will, **their own** way or **another party's** way and in a location **they themselves** or **another party** decides, 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Pet. 4:10; Acts 16:6-10; Rom. 14:3-12.
- C. Christ will approve believers if they **discipled** others **through the local church**, Mtt. 28:19f; Eph. 4:11f; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; 1 Tim. 3:14-15
- D. Christ will approve believers if they did such works these **ways**:
 1. The Matt. 25:14-30 parable of the talents by Jesus reveals He will judge believers for their **faithfulness**. This parable shows various servants being given **DIFFERING** amounts of **talents** and their master expecting differing **degrees** of **production**. Christ will thus hold us accountable for **faithfulness** in using abilities granted to us.
 2. The Luke 19:12-27 parable of the pounds by Jesus reveals He will judge believers for their **opportunism**. This parable shows various servants being given the **SAME** amounts of **pounds** to see **what** each would **accomplish** with them. Christ will thus hold us accountable for how well we **developed** our abilities and made the most of what **opportunities** we had to do God's will! (2 Tim. 1:6-7)
 3. Paul notes Christ will examine our **motives** of service, 1 Cor. 4:3-5.
- E. God gives us **ongoing** "job performance *evaluations*": God signals His **approval** via (1) one's being blessed from the **job itself**, or (2) in his being materially **rewarded** by **others** blessed **by** his work or in one's seeing **fruit** in his work, 2 Tim. 2:6 (Hendriksen, Tim.-Titus, p. 248f).

Lesson Application: *To prepare for the "Bema Seat", (1) believe in Christ for the secured salvation of the soul (John 5:24). (2) Then, (a) confess any sins we do for cleansing and (b) depend on the Holy Spirit for the will and power to do what Scripture says, 1 Jn. 1:9; Gal. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6. Specifically, this includes ((a)) focusing on using our God-assigned spiritual gifts to make disciples, ((b)) doing so in the location He assigns ((c)) and operating in keeping with local church order and ministries. ((d)) While IN this status, we excel by being FAITHFUL and ((e)) making the MOST of service opportunities that come our way and in developing to the FULLEST God's gift for service. ((f)) God will signal we do WELL by providing personal blessings IN our efforts, or in our gaining material rewards from those who are discipled or even in our seeing the promising fruits of our labors in our disciples' lives, 2 Tim. 2:6.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

While in Bible school, I once worked for a Christian who was a mink rancher. He needed men from our Bible school for seasonal jobs.

The day I joined his work crew we were to attach burlap to the northwestern walls of some mink cages. That would keep the winter wind from splitting the mink fir hairs so the firs could retain their value.

After starting to work, a colleague and I were assigned an extra **barn each** of mink cages! The other men were moved to another job. I wondered if the rancher thought I and my buddy weren't qualified for the **new** task and thus had left us to "plod" along with our burlap work! Though I felt uneasy about this job development, I really needed the money, so I began working at a hurried pace to try please the rancher!

We finished the barns and reported back to the rancher around 4:30 p.m. He seemed unconvinced of our report, and drove us back to the barns to see what we'd been up to! By now it was all I could do brace for the worst: I thought that surely we must have gone too slowly or somehow ruined his mink operation! But when we arrived at the barns and he saw our work, he merely **thanked** us and even **paid** us!

His son who attended our school later privately explained his Dad's actions. For weeks this rancher had worried about being behind schedule in his business! Well, early that work day morning he had felt that my buddy and I were working faster and better than the others at the first chore, so he had left us two to continue attaching burlap on the barns and moved the others to other jobs. He'd felt this made the most of the crew's manpower in view his operation's schedule crisis. Yet, the rancher had **not** expected **us** to **finish both barns!** *No two men had ever done that in a day before, let alone by 4:30 p.m. That is why he disbelieved our 4:30 p.m. report! When he saw what we'd done, he had not complimented us to avoid problems with the rest of the crew, but he was telling us via his son that we could work again on any crew!*

I later learned this rancher was an elder in Portland, Oregon's Central Bible Church who financially supported our school. My burlap work had likely indirectly aided our whole school's welfare that year!

The Lord used this to teach me a lesson. God is the Boss of our LIVES, and if we do what HE wants us to do, He signals His approval en route. So, if it is GOD'S assignment, keep hammering up the burlap! It will be worth it all at Christ's "Bema Seat"!