

The Judgments Series Part 20

The Meaning of the Judgment (*Bema*) Seat



Both **Romans 14:10** and **2 Corinthians 5:9** speak of the “judgment seat.”

Romans 14:10 NIV:

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister[a]? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.

2 Corinthians 5:9 NIV:

9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

This a translation of one Greek word, the word *bema*.

While *bema* is used in the gospels and Acts of the raised platform where a Roman magistrate or ruler sat to make decisions and pass sentence (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13), its use in the epistles by Paul, because of his many allusions to the Greek athletic contests, is more in keeping with its original use among the Greeks.

Matthew 27:19 NIV:

19 While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

John 19:13 NIV:

13 When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).

This word was taken from Isthmian games where the contestants would compete for the prize under the careful scrutiny of judges who would make sure that every rule of the contest was obeyed (cf. 2 Tim. 2:5).

2 Timothy 2:5 NIV:

5 Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.

The victor of a given event who participated according to the rules was led by the judge to the platform called the *Bema*.

There the laurel wreath was placed on his head as a symbol of victory (**cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-25**).

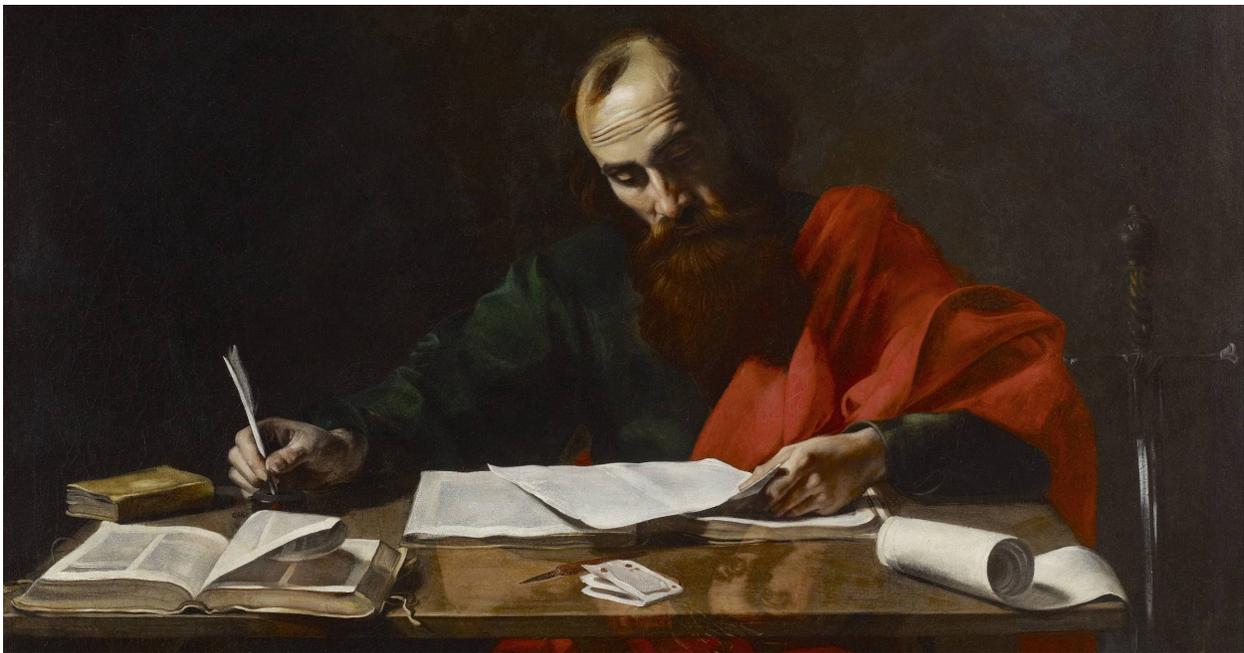


1 Corinthians 9:24-25 NIV:

The Need for Self-Discipline

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.



In all of these passages, “Paul was picturing the believer as a competitor in a spiritual contest.

As the victorious Grecian athlete appeared before the *Bema* to receive his perishable award, so the Christian will appear before Christ’s *Bema* to receive his imperishable award.

The judge at the *Bema* bestowed rewards to the victors.

He did not whip the losers.”

We might add, neither did he sentence them to hard labor.

In other words, it is a reward seat and portrays a time of rewards or loss of rewards following examination, but it is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins.

Such would be inconsistent with the finished work of Christ on the Cross because He totally paid the penalty for our sins.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and Dr. John Walvoord have an excellent word on this view:



With reference to sin, Scripture teaches that the child of God under grace shall not come into judgment (**John 3:18; 5:24; 6:37; Rom. 5:1; 8:1; 1 Cor. 11:32**); in his standing before God, and on the ground that the penalty for all sin—past, present, and future (**Col. 2:13**)—has been borne by Christ as the perfect Substitute, the believer is not only placed beyond condemnation, but being in Christ is accepted in the perfection of Christ (**1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:6; Col. 2:10; Heb.10:14**) and loved of God as Christ is loved (**John 17:23**).

John 3:18 NIV:

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 5:24 NIV:

24 "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

John 6:37 NIV:

37 All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Romans 5:1 NIV:

Peace and Hope

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 8:1 NIV:

Life Through the Spirit

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 11:32 NIV:

32 Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

Colossians 2:13 NIV:

13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you^[a] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

1 Corinthians 1:30 NIV:

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Ephesians 1:6 NIV:

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Colossians 2:10 NIV:

10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

Hebrews 10:14 NIV:

14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

John 17:23 NIV:

23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Again, Chafer writes concerning the *Bema*, “It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the judgment is unrelated to the problem of sin, that it is more for the bestowing of rewards than the rejection of failure.”



The Time of the *Bema*

This event will occur immediately following the rapture or resurrection of the church after it is caught up to be with the Lord in the air as described in 1Thessalonians 4:13-18.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NIV:

Believers Who Have Died

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Arguments in support of this view:

(1) In Luke 14:12-14, reward is associated with the resurrection and the rapture is when the church is resurrected.

Luke 14:12-14 NIV:

12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid.

13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,

14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

(2) In Revelation 19:8, when the Lord returns with His bride at the end of the tribulation, she is seen already rewarded. Her reward is described as fine linen, the righteous acts of the saints—undoubtedly the result of rewards.

Revelation 19:8 NIV:

8

Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

(3) In **2 Timothy 4:8** and **1 Corinthians 4:5**, rewards are associated with “that day” and with the Lord’s coming.

2 Timothy 4:8 NIV:

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

1 Corinthians 4:5 NIV:

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. **He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.** At that time each will receive their praise from God.



Again, for the church this means the event of -
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. (See above for Scripture Reading)

So the order of events will be:

1. The rapture which includes our glorification or resurrection bodies.
2. exaltation into the heavens with the Lord,
3. examination before the *Bema*.
4. compensation or rewards.

How do we obtain the Forgiveness of our Sins?



How do we get right with God, regardless of our individual sins?

Just say this Prayer and all of your sins will be forgotten, and you will have Eternal life, with Christ Jesus, in Heaven:

Lord Jesus, I repent of all my sins, and I ask you to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior.

Friends, if you prayed that prayer, I believe that you are born again, and you have everlasting life, get in a good bible teaching church, and may you keep growing, in the Lord, and may HE use you to help save many souls for His Kingdom !

In, Jesus Mighty Name!

Rev. Jesus Del Rio, Ed