



The Judgments Series Part 19

The Judgment Seat (*Bema*) of Christ



The Doctrine of Rewards

The judgment seat of Christ involves a time in the future when believers will give an account of themselves to Christ. This is the plain teaching of Scripture: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” **(2 Corinthians 5:10)**.

2 Corinthians 5:10 NIV:

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The warning is to Christians, not unbelievers. As Jesus taught in His parable, the king is going to return, at which time he will require an account from his servants (**Luke 19:11–26**).

Luke 19:11-26 NIV:

The Parable of the Ten Minas

11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

12 He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.

13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.^[a] ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

14 “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’

15 “He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

16 “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

17 “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

18 “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’

19 “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

20 “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. **21** I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’

22 “His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow?’

23 Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

24 “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

25 “‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

26 “He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away



The judgment seat of Christ is different from the great white throne judgment.

That will be the final judgment of the wicked prior to their being cast into the lake of fire (**Revelation 20:11–15**).

Appearing before the great white throne will be unbelievers. Believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Revelation 20:11-15 NIV:

The Judgment of the Dead

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

The judgment seat of Christ does *not* determine our salvation; that matter was settled by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf (**1 John 2:2**) and our faith in Him (**John 3:16**).

1 John 2 NIV:

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father— Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. **2** He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

John 3:16 NIV:

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

All our sins are forgiven, and there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 8:1**).

Romans 8:1 NIV:

Life Through the Spirit

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

Jesus said, “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 5:24**, emphasis added).

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.

In biblical literature, the term "seat" is often used both literally and metaphorically to denote a place of authority, judgment, or rest.

The concept of a seat is significant in understanding various aspects of biblical teachings and narratives.

Literal Seats

1. **Thrones and Authority:** In the Bible, seats often refer to thrones, symbolizing authority and governance. For instance, King Solomon's throne is described in detail, highlighting its grandeur and the authority it represents (**1 Kings 10:18-20**). The throne is a seat of power, where judgments are made and decrees are issued.

1 Kings 10:18-20 NIV:

18 Then the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with fine gold.

19 The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them.

20 Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom.

2. Seats in the Synagogue: In the New Testament, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for their desire to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets (**Matthew 23:6**).

This indicates a cultural context where seats were associated with status and recognition.

Matthew 23:6 NIV:

6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

3. Judgment Seats: The judgment seat, or "bema," is another significant use of the term. Pilate sat on the judgment seat when he presided over the trial of Jesus (**John 19:13**). This seat represents a place where legal decisions are made and justice is administered.

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).

Metaphorical Seats

1. Heavenly Authority: The Bible often uses the imagery of seats to describe heavenly authority. In Revelation, the twenty-four elders are depicted as sitting on thrones around the throne of God, symbolizing their role in divine governance and worship (**Revelation 4:4**).

Revelation 4:4 NIV:

4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

2. Seat of the Soul: The heart is sometimes metaphorically referred to as the seat of emotions and thoughts. **Proverbs 4:23** advises, "Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow springs of life." Here, the heart is seen as the central seat of one's inner life.

Proverbs 4:23 NIV:

23

Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.

3. Christ's Seat of Authority: The New Testament frequently speaks of Christ being seated at the right hand of God, a position of honor and authority. **Hebrews 1:3 states**, "After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." This signifies the completion of His redemptive work and His sovereign rule.

Cultural and Religious Significance

In biblical times, the seat was not merely a piece of furniture but a symbol of one's role and status within the community.

Whether in the context of a king's throne, a judge's bench, or a place of honor at a feast, seats were integral to the social and religious fabric of the time.



Spiritual Implications

The concept of a seat in the Bible also carries spiritual implications. Believers are encouraged to consider their spiritual position in Christ, who has seated them with Him in the heavenly realms (**Ephesians 2:6**). This reflects a position of spiritual authority and rest in the completed work of Christ.

Ephesians 2:6 NIV:

6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

In summary, the term "seat" in the Bible encompasses a range of meanings, from literal thrones and places of judgment to metaphorical representations of authority, status, and spiritual position. Understanding these various uses enriches the study of biblical texts and their application to the life of faith.

JUDGMENT SEAT

(bema, "a raised place," "platform," "tribune," **Matthew 27:19** **John 19:13**; see **GABBATHA**; **Acts 12:21** margin (text "throne"); **18:12-16**; **25:6-17**):

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).

Acts 12:21 NIV:

21 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his **throne** and delivered a public address to the people.

Acts 18:12-16 NIV:

12 While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment.

13 “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.”

14 Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you.

15 But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.”

16 So he drove them off.

Acts 25:6-17 NIV:

6 After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him.

7 When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

8 Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”

9 Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?”

10 Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well.

11 If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

12 After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

Festus Consults King Agrippa

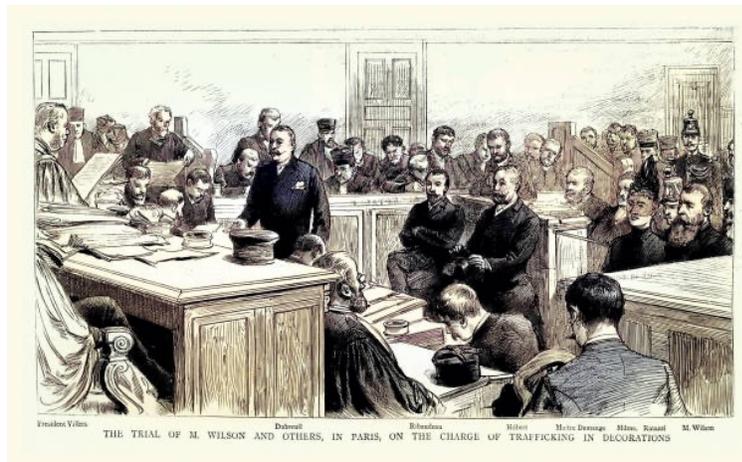
13 A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.

14 Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. He said: “There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner.

15 When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

16 “I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges.

17 When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in.



In Greek law courts, one bema was provided for the accuser, another for the accused; but in the New Testament the word designates the official seat of a judge, usually of the Roman governor; also of the emperor (**Acts 25:10**); then of God (**Romans 14:10**), of Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:10**).

Acts 25:10 NIV:

10 Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well.

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 5:10 NIV:

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The word **kriterion**, "a tribunal," "bench of judges" - (**James 2:6**) occurs also in (**1Corinthians 6:2-4**), and is there translated in the Revised Version margin by "tribunals."

James 2:6 NIV:

6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

1 Corinthians 6:2-4 NIV:

2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

As it will be shown below, though it is tremendously serious with eternal ramifications, the judgment seat of Christ is not a place and time when the Lord will mete out punishment for sins committed by the child of God.

Rather, it is a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how one has used his or her life for the Lord.



In **1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**, the Apostle Paul drew courage and was motivated by the fact of rewards at the return of the Lord for the church which he mentions in every chapter in this epistle and becomes the primary subject of **2 Thessalonians**.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 NIV:

19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? **20** Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

The Lord's return and what this means not only to the world but to us individually is a very prominent subject of the New Testament.

It is significant that among the final words of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we find these words of the Lord:

2 Thessalonians NIV:

1 Paul, Silas^[a] and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters,^[b] and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.

4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you

7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

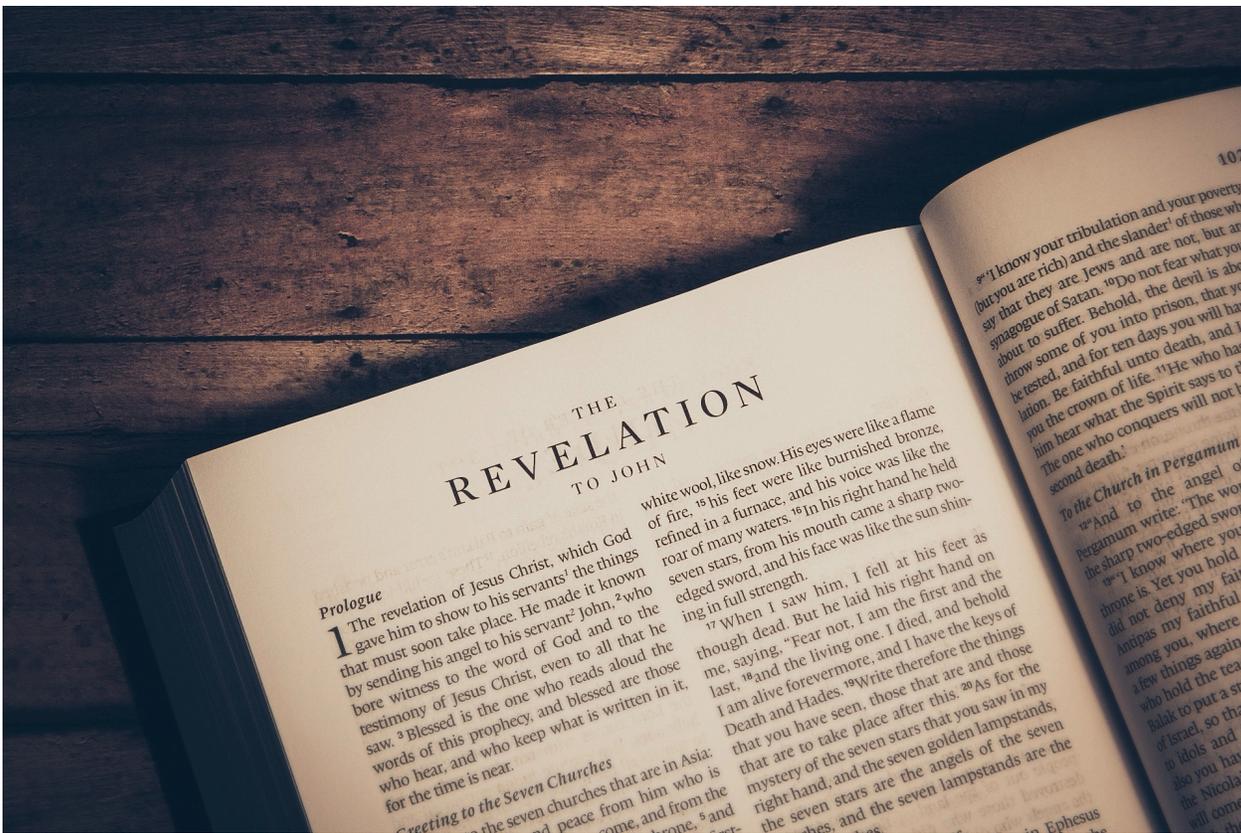
8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might

10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.

12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.[c]



Revelation 22:12 NIV:

Epilogue: Invitation and Warning

12 “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

While salvation is a gift, there are rewards given for faithfulness in the Christian life and loss of rewards for unfaithfulness.

Rewards become one of the great motives of the Christian’s life or should.

But we need to understand the nature of these rewards to understand the nature of the motivation.

Some people are troubled by the doctrine of rewards because this seems to suggest “merit” instead of “grace,” and because, it is pointed out, we should only serve the Lord out of love and for God’s glory.

Of course we should serve the Lord out of love and for God’s glory, and understanding the nature of rewards will help us do that.

But the fact still remains that the Bible promises us rewards.

God gives us salvation. It is a gift through faith, but He rewards us for good works.

God graciously supplies the means by which we may serve Him. Indeed, He works in us both to will and to do as we volitionally appropriate His grace (**Phil. 2:12-13**), but the decision to serve, and the diligence employed in doing so, are our responsibility and our contribution and God sees this as rewardable.

Philippians 2:12-13 NIV:

Do Everything Without Grumbling

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Compare the following passages:

1 Corinthians 15:10 NIV:

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Colossians 1:29 NIV:

29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Key Verses on Rewards:

Rom. 14:10-11; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 John 2:28; - Rev. 3:11-12.

Romans 14:10-11 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.

11 It is written:

“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”^[b]

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NIV:

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,

13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.

15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 NIV:

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

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

1 John 2:28 NIV:

God's Children and Sin

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Revelation 3:11-12 NIV:

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

12 The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.

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 ever lasting 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