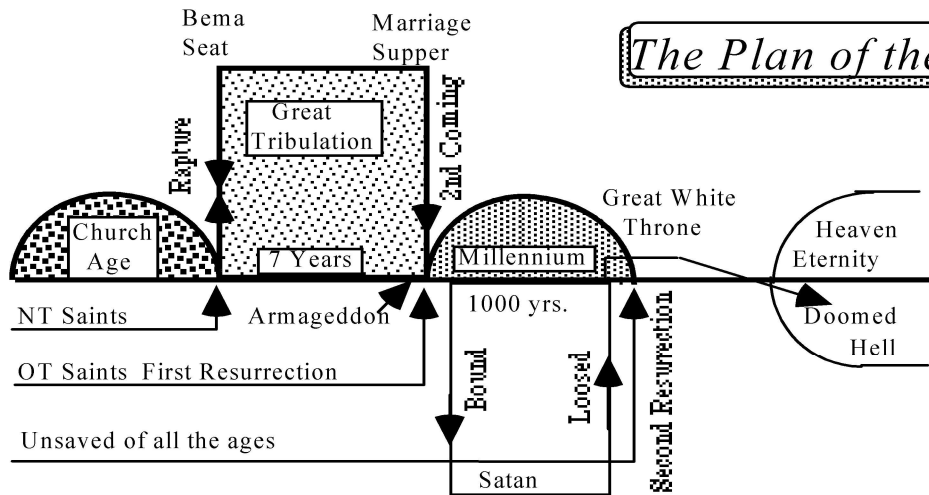


THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST AND MARRIAGE SUPPER

INTRODUCTION

- Both of these events occur in heaven during the time of the Tribulation on earth



THE JUDGMENT SEAT (BEMA) OF CHRIST

Romans 14:10 ~ For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God

2 Corinthians 5:10 ~ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 ~ According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The Nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ

- The word for "judgment seat" (*Bema*) is a word that was used to refer to a raised platform
- It was a place from which speeches were made and where justice was administered – a tribunal
- It referred to the official seat of a judge or a speaker's platform
- Numerous times in the NT this word is used in this sense:

John 19:13 ~ Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Acts 12:21 ~ On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the throne (rostrum) and *began* delivering an address to them.

Acts 18:12 ~ But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before **the judgment seat**

Acts 25:6 ~ After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on **the tribunal** and ordered Paul to be brought.

- Another meaning of this word refers to the raised platform on which an umpire or referee sat during the Olympic games...this was the place where the winners of the various events received their rewards
- As was tradition in that day, contestants would appear before the platform of judgment at the end of the Olympic games to receive their reward, normally a crown of olive branches
- So, the “judgment seat” was not only a place from which justice was administered, it was also a place that rewards were given
- It is probably this meaning of the word that Paul has in mind when he says that all believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ...It is a place of rewarding, not punishing
- Believers won’t stand before God to be judged for their sin (done in Christ)
- But they will stand before God to give an account of their actions

The Purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ

- Salvation is not the issue at the judgment seat of Christ because all who are present at it will be believers.
- Also, the judgment seat of Christ is not for dealing out retribution for sin
- The Bema seat is for the rewarding of believers for their faithfulness in this life

2 Corinthians 5:10 ~ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- The fact that Paul would one day be held accountable for his actions in this life motivated him to please the Lord
- He knew that what he did in this life had an impact on eternity
- Likewise, “all” believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ
- Why? → vs. 10 ~ that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
- The basis for our future judgment as believers is our present deeds
- God is going to evaluate us in the future on how we live now...Each deed will receive what it deserves
- It is what we did during our lifetime that is summed up as a total
- So at the judgment seat of Christ, our lives are going to be viewed as a unit
- And both that which is good and that which is bad will undergo the scrutiny of Christ’s watching eye
- What is “good” refers to those deeds that were worthwhile, eternal, for the glory of God, what has lasting value
- What is “bad” refers to those deeds that were worthless, good for nothing, without any eternal value
- God is going to look at the course of our lives and what is worthwhile will last and what is worthless will be lost
- The purpose of the judgment seat of Christ is to reward those believers who have been faithful
- It is to evaluate their life for the purpose of determining how much reward they are due for their faithfulness
- 1 Corinthians 3 fills in some of the details surrounding the evaluation of a believer’s life at the judgment seat of Christ

1 Corinthians 3:10-13 ~ According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

- These building materials represent the believer's works...Two categories of works emerge from this text
- The believer's works are symbolized by two opposing categories, either gold, silver, or precious stones OR wood, hay, or stubble
- The works represented by gold, silver, and precious stones refer to those works which are indestructible, done for the glory of God, in the power of God
- The works represented by wood, hay, and stubble refer to those works which are destructible, done for the glory of man, in the power of man
- Wood, hay, stubble refer to that which is worthless and easily destroyed
- And so the purpose of the judgment seat of Christ is to reveal what materials we as believers built with
- One day God will test with fire the quality of materials with which we built on the foundation of Christ
- That's the point in verse 13 ~ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work
- Paul says that the works of each believer will be put to the test to evaluate their genuineness
- Fire is a symbol for Christ's probing, all-searching judgment that scrutinizes every aspect of our lives
- The purpose of this testing fire is to determine that which is destructible and that which is indestructible
- God will put all our works to the fiery test and only that which survives the fire will receive reward
- All that is burned up will be lost and no reward

The Result of the Judgment Seat of Christ

1 Corinthians 3:14-15 ~ If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

- Vs. 14 ~ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward
- Believers who live faithful, godly, holy, obedient, Christ centered lives will have their deeds represented by gold, silver, precious stones
- And when put to the test by fire, their works will survive the test...it will remain
- Those believers receive a reward
- Paul doesn't say what the reward is here
- The New Testament speaks of many rewards for faithful believers
- Examples:
 - Greater opportunity to serve Christ in the future kingdom – parable of talents (Luke 19:16-19)
 - Special joy and fellowship with Christ (1 Pet 4:12-13)
 - Divine commendation for their faithfulness (Matt 25:21)
 - Crowns mentioned in the New Testament will be given to the faithful believers: an imperishable wreath (1 Cor 9:25), "the crown of exultation" (1 Thess 2:19), "the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim 4:8), "the crown of life" (James 1:12), or "the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).
- So there will be different levels of rewards in heaven
- But there will be some believers who have little or no reward in heaven
- Look at vs. 15 ~ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire

- There will be some believers whose lives are represented by wood, hay, stubble
- They are believers but their life was characterized by things that didn't have much eternal value
- Their works and deeds were often worthless and of little value
- The fire of evaluation consumed all the works represented by wood, hay, stubble
- And when the smoke clears, it is evident that there is nothing left
- Loss here is not loss of salvation or heaven...the loss is a forfeiture of reward
- Because their works lacked substance, quality, and the essential things the Lord required, the result of the judgment seat of Christ for these believers is loss of reward
- They forfeited their opportunity to be rewarded by the Lord for all of eternity because of how they wasted their opportunity in this life
- They are saved: vs. 15 ~ but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire
- Their salvation is not at stake...but they have barely escaped
- They lived a worldly life...They wasted opportunities to live for Christ
- They lived for themselves...they lived for the passing pleasures of the world
- Their deeds were worthless and had no eternal value

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:7-9 ~ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

- The Marriage of the Lamb follows the judgment seat of Christ but occurs prior to Christ's 2nd coming
- At this joyous occasion, church age believers are united with Christ forever
 - Christ will be the bridegroom
 - The church will be His bride
- Currently, the bridegroom (Christ) and the bride (the church) are separated, one in heaven, one on earth
- But at this celebration, the formal union of Christ and His church in an eternal relationship will occur
- A Hebrew wedding consisted of 3 parts:
 1. The Betrothal - a legally binding act which committed the man and woman to each other
 2. The Presentation – the festivities that preceded the ceremony
 3. The Ceremony – the exchanging of the vows
- The church was betrothed to Christ in eternity past
- The church will be presented to Christ at the Rapture
- The church will "exchange vows" with Christ at the final supper
- When that occurs, the promises of John 14:3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 are fulfilled

John 14:3 ~ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 ~ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.