

Judgment Seat of Christ

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

*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. **2 Corinthians 5:10***

- This is not about “works righteousness” or “salvation through works”. Salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**). The Judgment Seat of Christ is about assessing the faithfulness by which the believer fulfilled the “good works” for which (s)he was saved (**Ephesians 2:10**). This is necessary because, although salvation empowers the believer for good works, it does not guarantee the redeemed believer will do the required work!
- The Judgment Seat of Christ assesses our stewardship of our salvation.
- The works of the believer are judged by Christ from His “judgment seat” — sometimes called the “Bema Seat”, from the Greek equivalent of a Hebrew word “Bema” (Greek: βημα), which refers to a raised platform used by speakers, priests, or judges. This happens at Christ’s Second Coming, at the time of resurrection and rapture of the saints.
- **Christians sometimes mistakenly believe that they will not face judgment, but God’s Word does not say this.** Although we do not face condemnation or the penalty for sin, we must give an account of ourselves to Christ personally!

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

*“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME,
AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”*

*So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. **Romans 14:10-12***

- Paul clearly says we have no business judging other people, given our own accountability before God (see **Romans 14:10-12**). In fact, Paul says we should judge ourselves, probably as the first step required for repentance.

*But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged . . . **1 Corinthians 11:31***

- Christ does not judge everyone by the same standards. Some people will be judged more strictly for their deeds than other people.

*. . . From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. **Luke 12:48***

*Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. **James 3:1***

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What transpires at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

1. **The Judgment Seat of Christ is a time for you to receive praise and recognition from the Lord (or a rebuke).**

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave . . . Matthew 25:23

2. **The Judgment Seat of Christ is a time to receive your eternal inheritance.**

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to da living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. Colossians 3:23-25

3. **This inheritance includes assignments of honor and responsibility in Christ's Kingdom, depending on our faithfulness.**

, , , You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master. Matthew 25:23

4. **These honors and responsibilities are represented by "crowns", which are laurel wreaths, like those awarded to victorious athletes (Greek: "stephanos").** The Bible mentions some of these crowns; some saints may receive several crowns.

- **Imperishable Crown** - *Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 1 Corinthians 9:25 - These rewards are forever!*
- **Crown of Exultation (i.e. Rejoicing)** - *For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20 - Living Souls are the most precious reward for us in Heaven, not mere gold, silver, or material things. Whom have we touched for the Kingdom of Christ?!*

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I along to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. Philippians 4:1

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- **Crown of Righteousness** - . . . *in the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing.* **2 Timothy 4:8**
 - In this case, “righteousness” refers more to obeying Christ and “walking out” the works of our calling in salvation.
 - Saints who are “righteous” in obedience anxiously await Christ’s return because they “rightfully” anticipate their reward. This confidence is powerful for serving Christ effectively and it is its own reward.
 - Saints who are lax in fulfilling their calling in salvation disappoint Christ and are less anxious to embrace Christ when He comes again.

We don't want to disappoint Christ and lose our confidence for the day of His appearing. Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.
1 John 2:28

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.
Hebrews 10:35

- **Crown of Life** - ... *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.* **Revelation 2:10**; *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.* **James 1:12** — **The “Crown of Life” is given to the overcoming saint who perseveres under trial.**
- **Crown of Glory** - *Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.* **1 Peter 5:1-4**

5. **Christ’s Bema Seat is required because it is possible for us to fall short of our calling and not perform the works for which we were saved. We can forfeit our rewards by not paying attention to the Holy Spirit, by indifference or sin, or by allowing ourselves to be misled by others.**

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. **2 John 8**

I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
Revelation 3:11

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize. **Colossians 2:18**

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- Sin and indifference robs us of the desire to obey Christ and serve others.
- Sin and indifference grieves the Holy Spirit, separating us from His power to serve Christ and others effectively.
- Sin and indifference causes us to pass up opportunities for service for which we otherwise would have been rewarded.

6. The Bible clearly teaches that when we neglect the works of our salvation, we suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

*Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 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. **1 Corinthians 3:8-15***

7. The Judgment Seat of Christ is an "open book test". We have been given all that we need to excel in this examination.

- We were saved specifically for divinely ordained works that we should "walk in them." You were designed to do exactly these things!
*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. **Ephesians 2:10***
- We have been given a Helper to teach and equip us for these works.
*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. **John 14:26***
- We simply need to stay alert and sober to do these good works.
*. . . so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. **1 Thessalonians 5:6***
- We simply need to "press on" in faithfulness.
*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:14***