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What About The Judgment of Believers?

Charles Finney, a young lawyer, was sitting in a village law office in the state of New York. Finney had just come into the old squire's office. It was very early in the day, and he was all-alone when the Lord began to dealt with him.

"Finney, what are you going to do when you finish your course?"

"Put out a shingle and practice law."

"Then what?" "Get rich".

"Then what?" "Retire".

"Then what?" "Die".

"Then what?" And the words came tremblingly, "The judgment".

He ran for the woods a half-mile away. All day he prayed, and vowed that he would never leave until he had made his peace with God. He saw himself at the judgment bar of God. For four years he had studied law, and now the vanity of a selfish life, lived for the enjoyment of the things of the world, was made clear to him.

Finney came out of the woods that evening, after a long struggle, with the high purpose of living henceforth to the glory of God and of enjoying Him forever. From that moment blessings untold filled his life, and God used him in a mighty way, not as a lawyer but as preacher, to bring thousands to conversion over a useful period of fifty years. #2861

The Church Herald

Though Finney has escaped the judgment of God's wrath, he still will have to go through the judgment of believers! Heb. 9:27

We want to answer the question, "What about the judgment of believers?" by focusing on three things.

- I. The judgment of the believer is distinct from others in the Scriptures.
- II. The judgment of the believer is identified by the word "Bema Seat".
- III. The judgment of the believer is not based on rewards for works, but faithful service.

I. The judgment of the believer is distinct from others in the Scriptures.

- A. The Bible teaches the judgment of sin that took place at the cross of Jesus Christ.
 1. Jesus died for the entire world. Jn. 3:16
 - a. Every person ever to be born into this world throughout the ages. 1Jn. 2:2
 - b. Every person is a sinner by nature, dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1-2
 2. Jesus became sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness in Him. 2Cor. 5:21
 - a. For those in the past who had trusted by faith the animal sacrifice was a shadow and substitute for them of the Messiah to come, the Lamb of God.

- b. For those in the present who trust in Jesus for their justification before God to be saved.
- c. For all the future generation that would follow till His Second Coming.
 - * “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” Jn. 12:31

B. The Bible teaches the judgment of self that takes place every moment and day.

- 1. The believer confesses his or her sin to Christ when they fall short, in order to continue in fellowship with Jesus. 1Jn. 1:9
- 2. The believer is not perfect nor ever reach a point of sinlessness, so he or she confesses their sin to Christ when they fail in order that they not be chastened by the Lord. 1Cor. 11:31

C. The Bible teaches the judgment of Israel that takes place during the tribulation period.

- 1. The prophet Ezekiel said God would make them pass under His rode and purge the rebels. Ezk. 20:37-38
- 2. The prophet declares two of three Jews will die. Zech. 13:8-9
- 3. The apostle John says, “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the **woman** who gave birth to the male *Child*. But the **woman** was

given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.” Rev. 12:13-14

D. The Bible teaches the judgment of the nations that will take place at the return of Christ to the earth at His Second Coming with His church.

- 1. The nations will be judged for their treatment of Israel during the seven year tribulation and separated as sheep from the goats. Matt. 25:31-40
 - * “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the **least** of these My **brethren**, you did *it* to Me.’” vs. 40
- 2. The people of the nations will be deceive them and they will allow themselves to be deceived. Rev. 13:16-18
 - * “Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the **beast** and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, “he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” Rev. 14:9-10

3. The armies of the nations will attempt to stop Jesus from setting up the kingdom.
 - * “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their **armies**, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.” Rev. 19:19

E. The Bible teaches the judgment of the twelve tribes of Israel which takes place at the Millennium.

1. Jesus is speaking to His disciples, “So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you.” Matt. 19:28a-b
2. The context is the Kingdom Age, “that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory.” Matt. 19:28c-d
3. The twelve apostles have this high privilege, “you who have followed Me will also sit on **twelve thrones**, judging the **twelve** tribes of Israel.” Matt. 19:28e-f

F. The Bible teaches the judgment of the wicked at the end of the thousand year reign.

1. The judgment is called the White Throne Judgment for all who have not believed in Christ through out time. Rev. 20:11-12
 - a. This is after the thousand year reign, “Then I saw a great **white throne** and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And

there was found no place for them.” vs. 11

- b. The judgment is to give an account of their lives, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” vs. 12

2. The outcome of this judgment is described by three things. Rev. 20:13-15
 - a. The composite of all the unbelieving is re-gathered, “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.” vs. 13
 - a. The end of death and its final abode, “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.” vs. 14a
 - b. The identity and implication of the location, “This is the second death.” vs. 14b
 - c. The warning to every person, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” vs. 15

G. The Bible teaches the judgment of the angels that most likely takes place at the same time.

1. One third of the angels rebelled against God by following Satan or Lucifer. Is. 14, Ezk. 28, Rev. 12:6
2. Peter says some are in Tartarus delivered into chains of darkness reserved for judgment. 2Pet. 2:4
* Tartarus is a subterranean region of darkness to restrain and contain from their evil till the judgment.
3. Jude tell us that they did not keep their first domain, but rebelled from their own habitation or estate. Jude 6

The judgment of the believer is distinct from all these others in the Scriptures!

II. The judgment of the believer is identified by the word “Bema Seat”.

- A. There are two words for judgment seat in the Greek.
 1. There is the word “Kiterion” that identifies a place where judgment is given, a bench of judges, referring to tribunal law courts.
*.The word appears three times in the New Testament. 1Cor. 6:2, 4; Ja. 2:6
 2. There is another word “bema” which identifies a raised platform mounted by steps.

- a. The word was used to identify the “judgment seat” Pilate sat on when he judged our Lord. Matt. 27:19
 - b. The word was used for Herod when he sat on his “throne” to speak to the people of Tyre and Sidon. Acts 12:21
 - c. The word appears two times for the judgment of the believer. Rom. 14:10; 2Cor. 5:10
- B. The various uses of the term “bema seat”.**
1. The judgment seat of Pilate was called “bema” which was a raise platform as indicated by John's gospel called the pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabatha. Jn. 19:13
 2. The platform measured 4 feet by 3 feet by 2 feet high.
 3. The Greek law courts would provide such a platform for the accuser and one for the accused.
 4. The Grecian games in Athens would provide such a raise platform on which the judge would sit and from there they would reward the winning contestants as they stepped up on the platform.
 5. The term is used for either tribunal judgment or reward, the context will always determine the particular meaning!

- C. The believer is promised that he or she will stand before the “Bema Seat of Christ” for reward, not salvation.
1. The provisions for the believer’s past sins as an unbeliever were atoned for at the cross of
 - a. The Psalmist says, “As far as the **east** is from the **west**, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Ps. 103:12
 - b. David prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be **whiter** than **snow**.” Ps. 51:7
 - c. Isaiah says, “Come now, and let us **reason together**,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.” Is. 1:18
 - d. Peter says, “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the **precious blood** of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1Pet. 1:18-19
 2. The provisions for the believers sins in the present are equally based on the finished work of Christ, His blood and heavenly priesthood, this is **sanctification**.
 - a. The believer is to exercise self judgment for daily failures in order that God not chasten him.

- 1) Paul says, “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” 1Cor. 11:31-32
- 2) The author to the Hebrews says, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” Heb. 12:5-6
- b. The believer in this self judgment comes and plead his case of sin before his advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ. 1Jn. 2:1
 - 1) The reason once again is to maintain fellowship, for sin brakes our fellowship with God.
 - 2) “If I regard **iniquity** in my heart, The Lord will not hear.” Ps. 66:18
 - 3) “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.” Is. 59:1

The judgment of the believer is identified by the word “Bema seat”!

III. The judgment of the believer is not based on rewards for works, but faithful service.

A. The quality of the believer’s character is judged for reward at the “Bema Seat” of Christ.

1. Paul told the Corinthians, “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

1Cor. 14:10

* This does not mean we are not to judge the words or actions of believer, but rather that we do not know the reason or motives.

2. Paul also told the Corinthians each believer will one day stand before God, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” Rom. 14:12

* “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” 1Cor. 4:1-2

3. Paul again told the Corinthians, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 2Cor. 5:10

- a. The word good “agathos” describes that which is good in character and is beneficial in its affect or use.

- b. The word bad “kakos” indicates the lack in a person or thing regarding qualities which should be possessed, bad in character, meaning worthless, good for nothing, valueless in terms of faithful stewardship.

B. The motive of the heart is the acid test for reward at the “Bema Seat” of Christ. 1Cor. 4:5

1. The believer again is exhorted to not presume on knowing the motives of a person, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes.” 1Cor. 4:5a-b

* Once again is not speaking of not confronting or calling out a life of sin in the life of a believer!

2. The believer is to rest in the perfect judgment of Jesus, “who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.” 1Cor. 4:5c

- a. Jesus will reveal the hidden agendas for doing certain works.

- b. Jesus will reveal the hidden or ulterior motives behind the things done for people, the church, etc.

3. The believer will be commended by Jesus in accord with the quality and amount of faithful service, “Then each one’s praise will come from God.” 1Cor. 4:5d

- a. God is not impressed with how much I do or what I do, “Though I speak with the

tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” 1Cor. 13:1-3

- b. God will praise the individual for the proper motive, which clearly is taught to be agape love.
 - 1) Each believer has the potential and capacity of God’s agape love.
 - 2) Each believer is to yield to agape love for all that is done and to be more like Jesus.
 - 3) Each believer having a sin nature can and will resist and not yield or be motivated by the agape love of God every time.
 - 4) Every time I have yielded to God’s agape love, I have never failed, but every time I have not yielded to God’s agape love, I have failed miserably!
- c. The agape love of Christ motivated and compelled Paul to preach to lost man, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died

for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” 2Cor. 5:14-15

- C. The event of the “Bema Seat” of Christ is for every believer. 1Cor. 3:11-15
 - 1. There is only one foundation, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1Cor. 3:11
 - 2. The materials that Christians build one vary, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw.” 1Cor. 3:12
 - a. The precious metals and stones are not damaged by fire, but only purified and mark permanence, having lasting substance and value.
 - b. The wood, hay and straw are object that are consumed by fire, having no lasting substance or value.
 - 3. The fire will reveal or make evident of the quality of the works, “each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.” 1Cor. 3:13
 - a. Love for self, for recognition or hidden agenda.
 - b. Agape love for Christ and others.

4. The enduring material will be the source of the believers reward, “If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” vs. 14
 - a. There will be no mistake in the judgment.
 - b. There will not one person cheated in the judgment.
 5. The believer’s loss is of reward, this is not about salvation, “If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” vs. 15
 - a. Salvation is by Grace through faith!
 - b. Rewards are according to the motive of the heart!
- D.** The rewards at the “Bema Seat” of Christ will be at the catching up of the saints, the rapture of the church.
1. Jesus said to His disciples that He would come back to receive them unto Himself. Jn. 14:1-3
 2. Paul told the Thessalonians that the believer would one day be caught up “Harpazo” to meet the Lord in the air. 1Thess. 4:17
 3. John tells us just before he described the Lord’s return with His church to the earth, “for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready”. Rev. 19:7
* The wife having made herself ready is arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, which

- represents the righteous acts of the saints in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb, the “Bema Seat of Christ” has already taken place in heaven.
4. The one judging is Christ for the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Jn. 5:22
- E.** The erroneous concept that God is going to expose all of our sins at the bema seat before all is unscriptural.
1. The believer is assured that if we believe in Him, we have everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death to life and there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:1
 2. The believer’s sins have been cast behind God’s back, cast as far as east from the west and buried in the deepest ocean. Is. 38:17; Ps. 103:12; Mic. 7:19
* He *remembers* them ***no more!***
 3. The Lord has forgiven our sins for His name’s sake and He did not announce them to all on earth, do you think He will do any less in heaven for all eternity? 1Jn. 2:12
- F.** The ongoing exhortation to the believer’s faithful service and not to loose our reward is unmistakable.
1. John says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the

day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” 1Jn. 4:17

2. John again says, “Look to yourselves, that you lose not those things which we have worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.” 2Jn. 8
3. John again, “And now little children abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at his Coming.” 1Jn. 2:28
4. Jesus told the church of Thyatira, “But that which you have already hold fast till I come.” Rev. 2:25
5. Jesus said, “And behold I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according to his work shall be.” Rev. 22:12
6. Jesus closes the book of Revelation with these words, “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” Rev. 22:20

Illustration

Who does God’s work will get God’s pay,
 However weary be the way,
 Though powers and princes thunder “Nay”,
 Who does God's work will get God's pay.
 He does not pay as others pay.
 In gold or land or raiment gay;
 In goods that vanish and decay;
 But God in wisdom knows a way,

And that is sure, let come what may,
 Who does God's work will get God's pay. #5089

The words of Solomon are solemn words to all, both young and old.

“Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes: but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.” Eccl. 11:9-10

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil.” Eccl. 12:13-14

The judgment of the believer is not based on rewards for works but faithful service!

Conclusion

We have answered the question, “What about the judgment of believers?” by focusing on three things.

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