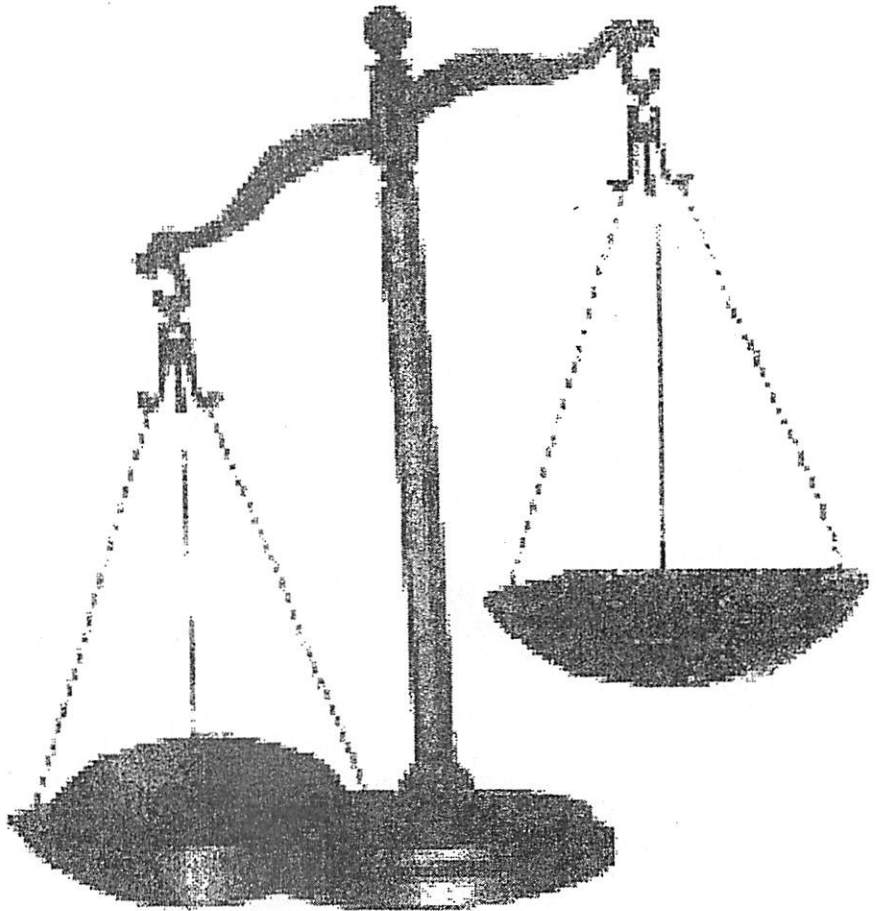


Judgments of God



Not to be sold

The Doctrine of the Judgments (Past, Present and Future)

Introduction

A great deal of confusion exist with respect to the subject of God's judgments and particularly regarding the final judgment. It is the purpose of this study to cover all the major judgments (past, present, and future) that we find in Scripture to help resolve this confusion. For instance, many do not understand that instead of one final judgment, the Bible teaches that there are a series of five to seven future judgments (depending on how they are categorized) that differ in respect to time, purpose, subjects, and circumstances. Understanding these various judgments will give insight into God's program, but the goal here is not just information. God wants Christians to understand the truth of the judgments to both comfort and motivate them to godly living. He want those who have not trusted in Christ to understand the judgments that this might motivate them to trust in Christ as their personal Savior because He bore the judgment for their sin in their place. The Christian will not face the final judgment because Christ was judged for us, but all believers will face a judgment called the Judgment Seat of Christ, the nature of which will be covered in the material to follow.

Point: Sin always has its consequences and the Doctrine of the Judgments calls our attention to both the reality and nature of the consequences of sin. The details of this will be developed in a summarized fashion in the material that follows.

Though one's primary focus might be on the future judgments, this study will also cover the judgments of the past and the present because they are related and form a part of the total picture revealed in Scripture.

I. The Past Judgments

A. The Judgment of Satan and the Fallen Angels

Key Scriptures (Matt. 25:41; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:11-19; Rev. 12:3-4)

This is God's judgment to cast Satan down from his position in heaven as the anointed cherub with all those angels who followed him to this earth and its atmosphere as the primary abode of their operations (cf.

Eph. 2:2 "the ruler of the kingdom of the air," NIV, ["air" is the Greek, *aer*, the atmospheric heavens]). Evidently, immediately after Satan's fall, God sentenced Satan and his angels condemning them to the Lake of Fire (Matt. 24:41). Though anticipated as certain and viewed as accomplished, this sentence against Satan and his evil host will not be carried out until after the millennial reign of Christ (cf. John: 12:31 with Rev. 20:10). The basis of Satan's judgment and final disposal is the finished work of Christ on the cross first anticipated in the protevangelium of Gen. 3:15. Then in anticipation of His death on the cross, the Lord spoke of Satan's judgment and doom in John 12:31; 16:11, and Luke 10:18-19. Compare also Romans 16:20; Ephesians 1:20-21; Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14-17.

B. The Edenic Judgments of Genesis 3

After the fall of Adam and Eve, and as a judgment for mankind's disobedience regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), certain curses or judgments were placed upon Satan (the promise of his final doom), upon Adam and Eve, and upon the earth. Adam and Eve died spiritually and began to die physically. Physical death became a certainty for their future because they took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, as the Scripture says, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment," (Hebrews 9:27). The judgment of Genesis 3 included the loss of the perfect Edenic conditions and in its place, the curse of the earth with its often extreme weather conditions, disease, thorns, and the warfare with Satan and his hosts (cf. Rom. 8:18-22; Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 5:8).

C. The Judicial Judgment--All Are Under Sin

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God;

Romans 5:12-15 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the transgression.

For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

All of mankind without distinction are under the curse of sin and judged as sinful and separated from God apart from the saving grace of God in Christ. All fall short of the glory of God—the immoral, moral, and religious (Rom. 1:18-3:9-15, 23). The only exception is the person of Jesus Christ who, through the virgin birth, escaped the sin problem that is normally passed down from generation to generation.

D. The Judgment to Moral Degeneration

According to Romans 1:18-32, when men turn away from the knowledge of God revealed so vividly in creation, God, as an expression of His holy wrath, turns men over to their own devices and foolish imaginations. This always results in moral devolution and degeneration. Paul teaches us that the varied forms of the awful sinfulness of man have their beginnings in the rejection of the revelation of God in creation. Ungodliness is always the source of unrighteousness; ungodliness (turning away from God) leads to idolatry (man worshipping the products of his own mind and hands), and idolatry leads to unchained sensuality.

As they refused to follow the light, they were brought to folly in their thoughts—"became vain in their [corrupt] reasonings, and their foolish [senseless] heart was darkened." The intellectual revolt against what they knew to be right was attended by a darkening of the whole understanding. The refusal to accept the truth destroys the power to discriminate between truth and error (James M. Stifler, *The Epistle To The Romans*, Moody Press, p. 31).

But this happens as a judgment from God against man's arrogant independence. This condition is the expression of God's wrath (vs. 18) and twice we have the statement that this moral breakdown occurs because God "gave them over" (vss 24 and 25). Compare also Ephesians 4:17-19.

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

E. The Judgment of Christ For the Sin of the World

This takes on two aspects:

(1) Christ's judgment for sin, dying in the place of the sinner, bearing his sin and judgment on the cross as the sinner's substitute.

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 Peter 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Romans 3:24-26 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Sin requires a penalty, the penalty of death as God's holy judgment on sin. Jesus Christ, the sinless and perfect Son of God, the only one who could qualify as our substitute, died to satisfy the demands of God's absolute holiness. Sin calls for judgment and the cross of Jesus Christ became that place of judgment. It was there Christ paid the penalty for the sin of the world (1 John 2:2).

(2) Christ's Judgment Unto Sin's Reign; the Judgment of the Believer's Sin Nature

Not only did Christ die for our sin as the Lamb of God (John 1:29), but He died to break the reign of sin in the lives of those who put their trust in Him as their Savior. This means that, through coidentification with Christ in His death on the cross, the believer's sin nature was also judged, crucified, with Christ in His death so that its power has been broken or neutralized. Though the death of Christ does not obliterate the presence of the sin nature and though it is still a powerful enemy (Rom. 7:15-24), the believer's union with Christ in His death provides for divine forgiveness for the fact of the sin nature and for victory over its reigning power.

Romans 6:4-11 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

See also Col. 2:10-13; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:1-2

II. The Present Judgments

A. The Self-Judgment of the Believer

An interesting and important passage to this study is Acts 24:15-16 because in this passage Paul implicitly made reference to two judgments which are closely related. The text reads:

Acts 24:15-16 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men.

The resurrection of the just mentioned in verse 15 will be followed by the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Bema, the place and time when believers will be examined for rewards or their loss (see *The Future Judgments* below for details). Knowing and having the hope of the resurrection and all that this means to the Christian, the Apostle spoke of his commitment to maintain a clear conscience, one cleared by confession and the forsaking of all known sin (1 John 1:9; Prov. 28:13). He wanted to walk blamelessly, to keep short accounts with God, and to stay in close communion with the Lord lest he should become disqualified for rewards at the Bema (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15 with 9:24-27).

Though believers are saved and justified by faith in Christ as the crucified Saviour, the Scriptures assume that Christians will battle with sin and will not always be victorious. So it is necessary for believers to judge their own sins in the light of Scripture (Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Volume Two, Abridged Edition, Walvoord, Editor, Consulting Editors, Campbell, Zuck, p. 501).

This is a serious matter with consequences both for time and eternity since the failure to do so leads not only to the loss of rewards, but the judgment of God's discipline of His believing children as a loving Father and as the Vine Dresser who must prune the vine for production (Heb. 12:4-11; John 15:1-7). A very interesting, enlightening, and important passage to this subject is 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 for in this passage we have a reference to both the self-judgment of the believer and the discipline judgment of God on believers.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Some of the Christians at Corinth were being externally religious. They were assembling themselves with other believers and partaking of the Lord's supper, but they were out of fellowship with the Lord and were controlled by the sinful nature, the flesh, rather than by the Holy Spirit. This is why earlier the Apostle called them "fleshly" (the Greek *sarkikos*, "adapted to, controlled by the flesh") (3:3). Unfortunately, this condition had continued because some of these believers had failed to examine their hearts and judge their sin by honest confession followed by a commitment to deal with it in the power of the Spirit (11:28, 31). As a result, a number of things occurred: (1) they were making a mockery of the significance and meaning of the Lord's supper (11:27); (2) they were experiencing personal discipline by the Lord which existed in three conditions, evidently progressively so (11:30, 32); and though not mentioned here, (3) they were producing wood, hay, and stubble—they were losing rewards (1 Cor. 3:14-15).

As to the immediate consequences, some were weak (feeble, a loss of energy), some were sick (probably chronic disease), and some were asleep (physical death, sin unto death) (11:30). But these were not the only consequences of failing to judge sin in their lives. There were also divisions and factions and the focus on personalities rather than the Savior. They were showing favoritism and hurting other believers rather than showing love and concern as it should be among believers in Christ. In other words, when we fail to honestly judge sin in our lives it spills over in one area after another. As the loving Father that He is, God must break out the board of discipline in His loving commitment to bring us back to Himself.

So Christians need to examine their hearts and actions for sin according to the Scripture and then judge the sin they find as sin and confess it to the Lord. Our tendency is to rationalize and excuse our sins, but God says we are judge them as sin to God. Confession of sin restores us to fellowship and to the Spirit's control. With the Spirit back in control and the believer in fellowship (in the state of abiding in the Vine) he or she can then produce fruit for which they will receive rewards at the Bema. (For more information on the issues of fellowship with the Lord and sin in the life, see Lesson 14 in this series on the basics.)

B. The Discipline Judgments of God

As seen in the above section dealing with self-judgment, the New Testament clearly teaches us that one of the ministries of our heavenly Father is the ministry of loving discipline. God's discipline is patterned after the principles of Proverbs 13:24 which read: "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently." Discipline is an evidence of love. So we read in Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:4-11 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment

seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

From this passage in Hebrews and others like 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, God disciplines His children for the following reasons:

1. To bring a wayward child who refuses to judge himself back into fellowship (1 Cor. 11:31-32; Ps. 32:3-5).
2. It is part of the training process by which God's children are brought into the experience of God's holiness (Heb. 12:10).
3. It is an expression and a proof of God's love (Heb. 12:6, 8).
4. It is designed to produce obedience and to protect them against untimely physical death (Heb. 12:9; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 11:30).
5. It yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (12:11).

5. C. Human Judgment of Others

Generally speaking, the principle is stated in Matthew 7:1-5.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Do not judge lest you be judged. "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

We are not to judge others in the sense of condemning them or passing judgment on the opinions of others on doubtful matters as discussed in Romans 14.

Romans 14:1-5 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

However, Scripture does call us to show what we might call critical discernment on certain matters. For instance, Matthew 7 which tells us not to judge, is immediately followed with the command, "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest

they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces" (Matt. 7:6).

How do we know who falls into the category of swine, those incapable of appreciating the truth, if we do not make certain judgments? Furthermore, we are called upon to make judgments in the sense of evaluations when it comes to selecting elders and deacons, or in dealing with those who have fallen into sin (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:9-16; Gal. 6:1-5; 2 Thess. 3:6-15).

III. The Future Judgments

A. The Judgment of the Bema (The Judgment Seat of Christ)

The next prophetic event in God's time table will be the rapture or the catching up of the body of Christ, the church, as described in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. A number of things occur at this time. There is the glorification of living believers in glorified bodies, the resurrection of those believers who have died in the Lord also in glorified bodies, and the translation of both to meet the Lord in the air. This will be followed by their examination before the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is not the final judgment mentioned in Revelation 20:11-15 which is limited to only the unbelieving world. Rather, the Judgment Seat of Christ is for the body of Christ, the church. A similar judgment will occur for resurrected Old Testament and Tribulation saints, but probably not until after the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 12:1-3 with Rev. 20:4).

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. Both Romans 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:9 speak of the "judgment seat." This is a translation of one Greek word, the word *bema*. While *bema* is used in the Gospels and in 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.

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).

The victor of a given event, who had participated according 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).

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*" (Samuel Hoyt, "*The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective*," Part 1, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, p. 37, January-March, 1980, *Electronic Media*). We might add, neither did he sentence them to hard labor.

In other words, it was a reward seat and portrayed a time of rewards or loss of rewards following examination. It was 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.

Though believers are under no condemnation in respect to their sins, having been justified by faith (John 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1, 13-17), they are subject to judgment at the Judgment seat of Christ in relation to their works. At the Judgment Seat of Christ believers' works will be evaluated to demonstrate whether they are good or bad, and rewards will be conferred (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:9-14; 9:24-27). The goal of the Christian in his life is to be pleasing to God whether in time or eternity. The Judgment Seat of Christ is not related to salvation but to the bestowal of rewards, and every Christian is assured that he will receive some reward (1 Cor. 4:5; cf. Eph. 6:8; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12). (Chafer, Walvoord, Campbell, Zuck, p. 502).

See Appendix B for more on the Judgment Seat (Bema) of Christ.

B. The Judgments of the Tribulation

While the Bema is going on in heaven (with the church in the Lord's presence) a series of terrible judgments will begin to unfold on the earth for a period of seven years to be culminated by the return and manifestation of Christ to earth as the Great White Horse Rider of Revelation 19.

The main point to see here is that this entire period is the expression of God's wrath in increasing degrees of judgment to be poured out on the world. The world seeks to find answers to its problems through the one

world movement of the last days and apart from the true God as He has revealed Himself in Christ. So, much as we see in Romans 1:18f, God turns the world over to the consequences of its choices. The result is the one world system of the Beast as described in Revelation. It will begin with an apparent time of prosperity and peace created by this one world government under the deceptions of the man of lawlessness. But even this will be God's judgment and the expression of His wrath. While people are saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction will come as birth pains upon a woman in travail. The judgments of this time will grow in intensity and conclude with an awesome display of God's wrath against a Christ-rejecting world.

See Appendix C for an overview of the Tribulation.

C. The Judgment and Reward of Resurrected Old Testament and Tribulation Saints

While many would place the resurrection and reward of Old Testament saints with that of the church at the rapture, a number of factors favor this at the conclusion of the tribulation at the same time as the resurrection and reward tribulation saints mentioned in Revelation 20:4.

1. Daniel, who wrote concerning the termination of God's program for Israel in chapter 9, places the resurrection of the righteous in Israel as occurring after "a time of distress such as never occurred . . ." Clearly this is the Tribulation, Daniel's Seventieth Week, or "the time of Jacob's Distress" mentioned by Jeremiah (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27).
2. Resurrection is viewed in Scripture as an event that terminates one program and initiates another, and one would not expect Israel's resurrection could come until God had finished the seventy years decreed for His people, the Jews, according to Daniel 9:24-27. Since the events mentioned in Daniel 9:26 (the cutting off of Messiah and the destruction of city and sanctuary) had to occur after the 69 weeks of years had run their course but before the seventieth week begins, there has to be a space of time, the parenthesis of the church age, between the conclusion of the sixty-ninth week and the beginning of the seventieth.
3. The resurrection (rapture) and Bema of the church concludes this parenthesis, the church age, but Old Testament saints (the righteous dead) are not resurrected and rewarded until after the seventieth

week when God's concludes His program with Israel as far as the seventy weeks of Daniel are concerned.

The order of God's resurrection program which includes the judgment of rewards would seem to be:

(1) the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of the resurrection program (1 Cor. 15:23); (2) the resurrection of the church age saints at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16); the resurrection of tribulation period saints (Rev. 20:3-5), together with (4) the resurrection of Old Testament saints (Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19). (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, Dunham Publishing Co., p. 411).

D. The Judgment of Living Israel

3. *The Time of This Judgment*

The Scripture teaches that before Messiah can begin to reign, there must be a judgment to determine who will enter into Messiah's kingdom since "they are not all Israel (spiritually regenerated believers who put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Messiah) who are Israel (physical descendants only) (Rom. 9:6). The rebels of unbelief must be removed so that only believing Israel will enter into the kingdom (cf. Ezek. 20:34-38; Matt. 25:1-30).

Part of this removal occurs through the Tribulation judgments themselves (Rev. 6-19; Zech. 13:8-9). But those who are not killed by these judgments will be gathered, judged, and the rebels removed with only believers going into the millennial kingdom.

Matthew 24-25 set the chronology and thus the time. The order is:

1. The Tribulation judgments (Matt. 24:4-26).
2. The visible return of Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:27-30).
3. The regathering of those Israelites who were left after the tribulation judgments, both believing and unbelieving Jews (Matt. 24:31; Ezek. 20:34-35a).
4. The judgment of the Nation of Israel (Matt. 25:1-30; Ezek. 20:35b-38).

4. *The Place of This Judgment*

At the end of the Tribulation, the Lord Jesus will return personally to earth (Zech. 14:4), but Ezekiel 20:34-35 shows God brings Israel out

from the nations where she has been scattered throughout the times of the Gentiles (gathers her to the last person, Ezek. 39:28). But Israel is first gathered at the borders, outside the land of Israel, called in Ezekiel 20:35 "the wilderness of the peoples," for judgment, face to face, one by one as sheep pass under the shepherd's rod.

The Basis of This Judgment

Revelation 7:14 shows us that salvation in the Tribulation (as in the church age) is through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. This is further confirmed by the message of the book of Romans where the Apostle shows Israel's problem to be one of seeking to establish her own righteousness by keeping the Law rather than accept God's righteousness by faith in Christ (Rom. 9-11). Matthew 25:1-30 shows that God will judge living Israel to separate the saved from the unsaved. In this passage and in Malachi 3:2-3, 5, and Ezekiel 20:37-38, the individual's works will be brought into judgment, but not because they are saved by their works, but because their works demonstrate they are rebels who have failed trust in Jesus.

E. The Judgment of Living Gentiles

Just as He judged the Jews still alive at the end of the Tribulation when Christ personally returns to earth, so He will also judge those Gentiles who remain (Matt. 25:31-46).

At the judgment of the Gentiles Christ will separate the sheep, representing the saved, from the goats, representing the lost (Matt. 24:31-46). Though salvation is by grace and through faith, the saved who come out of the Great Tribulation will be identified by their works in befriending their Jewish brothers. In the universal anti-Semitism of the Great Tribulation one who befriends Jews will by this evidence manifest his salvation (Chafer, p. 503).

F. The Final Judgment of Satan and the Fallen Angels

Throughout the centuries as anticipated in the enmity mentioned in Genesis 3:15, there has been constant warfare between the holy angels who minister to God's people and Satan and his unholy angels, the demonic spirits. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier concerning the judgment of Satan, God has manifested His power by defeating Satan and his hordes. While, for God's own purposes, Satan has been allowed to continue his nefarious schemes, Scripture speaks of three sure events regarding the activity of Satan and his demonic forces: his binding

during the millennium, his short release, and his final incarceration in the Lake of Fire. Then all opposing powers against the Lord will be dealt with in judgment (Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Cor. 15:24-26).

G. The Judgment of the Great White Throne

Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴ And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

This vision of the Great white Throne describes the last and final judgment of history. It is an awesome and solemn scene and one which should cause everyone to stop and think about the eternal implications of this future event. For the non-Christian, the one who has never trusted in the person and work of the Jesus Christ, it should cause him to want to search out the truth regarding the Jesus Christ, to embrace Him in faith as the Savior from his sin and eternal doom. For the Christian, the future reality of this event should cause deep concern because of the many (including some of our friends and relatives) who will face this throne of judgment because they never received the Savior by faith.

All who have scoffed at God, denied His being, rebelled at His rule, or rejected His sovereignty--and in the process, also rejected His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ--must at this time stand before this throne to be condemned to eternal judgment. May the reality of this judgment cause us to carefully reflect on the serious consequences of this passage on a Christ rejecting world.

The Time of This Judgment

Revelation 20:5, 11-15 shows this takes place after the conclusion of the millennium following the doom of Satan and the destruction of heaven and earth, but before the eternal state of the new heavens and earth of Revelation 21:1.

The Place of This Judgment

Heaven and earth are seen fleeing from the face of Him who sits on this throne (20:11). In other words, they are destroyed, dissolved (2 Pet. 3:7, 10-12). The point is the Great White Throne Judgment does not occur on earth or in heaven as we know it, but somewhere beyond, perhaps in extreme outer space. This indication is also clear that it does occur in the new heavens and earth which are not created until after this event (cf. 20:11 with 21:1).

In other words, God has removed Satan and his demons, the False Prophet and the Beast, and is about to judge the rest of the unbelieving dead. So, it is only fitting that He also judge the old earth and heavens that has been the arena Satan's activity and man's sin and rebellion. This evidently takes place after the resurrection of the unbelieving dead from the grave and Hades. They are resurrected, gathered before the throne and actually behold the dissolution of heaven and earth as a foreboding preparation for their judgment. All their hopes and dreams had been placed in an earth and system that was passing away (1 John 2:17), and now they see it dissolve before their very eyes.

"And no place was found for them," i.e., for heaven and earth. In the eternal state there will be no place for that which reminds men of the rebellions of Satan and man with all its wickedness and sorrow (Rev. 22:3; 21:4; Isa. 65:17).

The Character of This Judgment

It is called "great" because of the awesome intensity and the degree of its importance. Here each unbeliever's eternal destiny is declared and determined with ample proof and reason. It is great because it is the final judgment and puts an end to all judgment for all time. It is great because all the unbelievers of all time, from Cain to the final revolt at the end of the Millennium, will be here assembled to face the bar of God's holy justice.

It is called "white" because it will be the supreme and undimmed display of the perfect righteousness and justice of God to all mankind. Throughout history God has revealed Himself in creation (Rom. 1:18-21), a revelation man has ignored. Through the Scriptures and the remnant of His people, He has taught man that he must have God's righteousness, that God is of purer eyes than to approve evil or to accept or look upon wickedness (Hab. 1:13), that all have sinned and

come short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), and that the penalty of sin is eternal death, separation from God (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:2). Now these facts will be come evident to each individual and proven without question.

It is called a "throne" because here the Lord Jesus Christ will sit in absolute majesty and sovereign authority to consign a Christ-rejecting world to the eternal Lake of Fire. In Revelation 4:2 John beheld a throne set in heaven from which the Tribulation judgments proceeded. The word throne is used more than 30 times in Revelation, but this throne, the great white one, is to be distinguished from all others as the most significant one of all.

The Participants of This Judgment

The judge is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:22-23, 27). All judgment has been placed into His hands as the perfect Son of man, Son of God, the one qualified to judge by virtue of his sinless humanity and defeat of Satan and sin through the cross (Rev. 5:1-14).

Those judged are "the dead, great and small," those who had no part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6). Specifically, this is the dead of the second resurrection, the resurrection of the unjust, the resurrection unto the second death mentioned in Revelation 20:5-6, 12-14, and John 5:29b. "The dead, great and small" emphasizes that no one is exempt. All who have died without faith in Jesus Christ--regardless of their status in human history, religiously, politically, economically, or morally--must stand before this throne of judgment.

The Source of Their Resurrection

Revelation 20:13a shows they come from :

1. "The sea," a reference to all those who died at sea and were not buried in the earth.
2. "Death," a reference to all those who were buried in graves in the ground, cremated, or destroyed in any other way on earth.
3. "Hades," a reference to the place of torments, the compartment which contains the souls of all unbelievers (Luke 16:23). The sea and death (i.e., the ground) contain the bodies and Hades contains the souls. At this resurrection the soul and body are reunited and the person is brought before the throne.

3. *The Basis of This Judgment*

The basis of the judgment is what is found in the two sets of books--the books which are opened, and the other book, the Book of Life (Rev. 20:12b, 13b, 15a). Note that the text says "and the books (plural) were opened, and another book (singular) was opened, which is the Book of Life." We have two sets, the books and the book which is mentioned again in verse 15a.

The Books: The identity of the books is not specifically revealed and we can only speculate from a comparison of other passages of Scripture and from the nature of these verses. I believe we have two books here.

(1) The first book opened will probably be the Scripture, the Word of God, which contains the revelation of God's holy character, the moral law, the declaration of man's sinfulness, and God's plan of salvation through faith in Christ. This book also reveals that even when men do not have the written Word, they have the law of God written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14-16), and the revelation of God consciousness in creation so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:18-21; 2:12). Undoubtedly, then, the Scripture will be used to demonstrate the clearness of the plan of God and that man is without excuse. John 12:48 is very pertinent here:

"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."

(2) The second book will be the book of works or deeds. Verses 13 and 14 state that the unbelieving dead will be judged according to their deeds (works). Undoubtedly then, one book is the book of works which contains a record of every persons deeds as a witness of the true nature of their spiritual condition.

"Deeds" is the Greek word, *ergon*, which refers to anything that is done, "a deed, action, or work." It is used of good deeds (Matt. 26:10; Mark 14:6; Rom. 2:7), of evil deeds (Col. 1:21; 2 John 11), of dead works (Heb. 6:1; 9:14), of unfruitful deeds (Eph. 5:11), of ungodly deeds (Jude 15), of deeds of darkness (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:11), and of works of the Law (Rom. 2:15).

The principle here is that Jesus Christ died for their sins no matter how evil that He might forgive them and give them a righteousness from God that they may have a perfect standing before God. As Paul declares in Romans 5:1-2:

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

But when men reject the knowledge of God and His plan of salvation, they in essence determine to stand on their own merit, or in their own righteousness. So, the book of works will contain a record of all the unbeliever's deeds, good and bad, to demonstrate the truth of Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall (continually miss the mark) short of the glory (perfect holiness) of God." All fall short of God's perfect righteousness and have therefore no basis upon which to stand accepted (justified) before a holy and just God. This judgment proves them sinners and in need of the righteousness which God freely gives through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Book of Life: This book contains the names of all believers, of all who have put their faith in Christ and God's plan of salvation or righteousness through the substitutionary death of Christ. Or, to put it another way, it is a record of those who have not rejected God's plan of salvation and have responded to Christ in faith; for these their faith is reckoned for righteousness and their sins have not been imputed to them (Rom. 4:4-6, 22).

At the Great White Throne Judgment the book of life is produced to show that the participant's name was not found written in the Book of Life because of their rejection of Jesus Christ. They, therefore, have no righteousness and cannot be accepted before God, but must be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire. The Book of Life contains the names of believers, those justified by faith and who have a righteousness from God imputed to their account. These and only these are accepted by God and will spend eternity with Him (cf. Rom. 10:1-4; Phil. 3:9).

The Judgment or Punishment

Revelation 20:14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

"Death" refers to the body now resurrected while "Hades" refers to the soul, the immaterial part of man. Both, body and soul, are eternally separated from God in the eternal Lake of Fire, a very real, literal, and eternal place according to the Scripture.

It is so important to note the emphasis here. The real issue is whether one's name is in the Book of Life, not one's deeds. The deeds of the

unbeliever are only examined to show that the person, no matter how much good they have done, falls short of God's holy demands. Paul shows us in Romans that all categories of people--the good, the bad, and the ugly--are really in the same boat and on their way to eternal separation from God. Obviously, most see that the immoral person deserves the wrath of God, as the Apostle describes in Romans 1:18-32. But he also shows us that the same applies to the good person and moral person as well as the religious person (Rom. 2:1-3:23). Nobody bats 1000 no matter how good they may appear to men. In the face of the awesome holiness of God, they are sinners and cannot stand in the presence of God on their own merit.

The awesome fact is that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. The loss of salvation, and ultimately the one sin that separates a person from God and confines him to the eternal Lake of Fire, is because of failure to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and a perfect righteous standing before God.

John 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (NIV)

Regarding the coming of the Spirit and His ministry in the world after the resurrection and ascension to God's right hand, Christ made the following promise:

John 16:8-11 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; **concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me**; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (emphasis mine)

Since the Savior has died for the sin of the world (1 John 2:2), the ultimate issue is the sin of unbelief or rejection of Christ.

Conclusion

Friend, have you put your trust in the person of Christ as the God-Man Savior who died for your sin? If you have not, may I encourage you to read Appendix A, investigate the claims of Christ, and receive Him as your Savior by faith.

APPENDIX A

An Explanation of the Gospel

Introduction

As the Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, Jesus said, "I have come that they (all mankind) may have life, and have it abundantly," a life with meaning and purpose. The Bible teaches us that God loves all people and wants to bring them into a harmonious relationship with Himself. But man is separated from God by the problem of Sin. God has resolved that problem through the person of Jesus Christ. The following is a short presentation of the good news of how God has provided that men might know Him and experience eternal life.

God's Plan of Salvation

While 1 John 5:11 and 12 are written to Christians to give them assurance of their salvation based on the testimony of God's Word, this passage also highlights the key issue in God's plan of salvation as it is centered in the person of Jesus Christ.

- **God's Declaration to Man:** *"And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (verse 11).*
- **The Important Issue:** *"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (verse 12).*

This Passage Teaches:

- That God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- That the way to possess eternal life is to possess God's Son.

Two Important Questions Must be Asked and Answered:

- Why is possession of God's Son necessary to have eternal life?
- How can a person possess or have the Son of God?

•The Problem of Man's Separation from God

According to Romans 5:8, God demonstrated His love for us through the death of His Son. Why did Christ have to die for us? Because Scripture declares all men to be sinful. We are all sinners. *"To sin"* means to

miss the mark. The Bible declares, "*we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory* (the perfect holiness) *of God.*" In other words, our sin separates us from God who is perfect holiness (righteousness and justice) and who must therefore judge sinful man (Rom. 3:23; Hab. 1:13; Isa. 59:2).

The Problem of the Futility of Man's Works

Scripture also teaches us that no amount of human goodness or human works or human morality or religious activity can gain acceptance with God or get anyone into heaven. The moral man, the religious man, and the immoral and non-religious are all in the same boat--they all fall short of the glory of God (God's perfect righteousness). After discussing the immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man in Romans 1:18-3:8, the Apostle Paul declares "*that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin,*" that "*there is none righteous, not even one,*" and "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:9-10, 23).

Added to this are the declarations of the following verses of Scripture:

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Titus 3:5-7: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to {the} hope of eternal life."

Romans 1:1-5: "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness."

No amount of human goodness is as good as God. God is perfect righteousness. Because of this, He cannot have fellowship with anyone who does not have perfect righteousness (Hab. 1:13a). In order to be accepted by God, we must be as good as God is. Before God, we all stand naked, helpless, and hopeless in ourselves. No amount of good living will get us to heaven or give us eternal life. What then is the solution?

God's Solution for Man's Problem

God is not only perfect holiness (whose holy character we can never attain to on our own or by our works of righteousness) but He is also perfect love and full of grace and mercy. Because of His love, grace and mercy He has not left us without hope and a solution.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us."

This is the good news of the Bible, the message of the gospel. It's the message of the gift of God's own Son who became man (the God-man), lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sin, and was raised from the grave proving both the fact He is God's Son and the value of His death for us as our substitute (Rom. 1:4; 4:25).

2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

1 Peter 3:18: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, {the} just for {the} unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

The All-Important Question

How then do we receive God's Son that we may have the eternal life God has promised us? What becomes the issue for us today?

John 1:12: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, {even} to those who believe in His name."

John 3:16-18: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us on the cross, the Bible states that *"He that has the Son has life"* and we can receive the Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior by personal faith, by trusting in the person of Christ and His death for our sins.

This means we must each come to God the same way--as a sinner who recognizes his sinfulness, repudiates any form of human works for salvation, and relies totally on Christ alone by faith alone for our salvation.

If you would like to receive and trust Christ as your personal Savior, you may want to express your faith in Christ by the following prayer:

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner and that nothing I do can gain heaven or eternal life. I believe Jesus Christ died for me and rose from the grave. Right now I receive Him as my personal Savior by trusting in Him alone as my only way to heaven. Thank you for giving me eternal life through faith in your Son. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

If you prayed this prayer and truly trusted in the person of Jesus Christ and His death for your sin, then you have been born anew into the family of God. You are now one of God's children by faith in the Savior.

As a child of God, you are, however, a babe in Christ and you need to grow and be spiritually nourished and built up in the things of Christ. As with all Christians, you need fellowship with other believers in a Bible teaching church, personal time daily in God's Word and regularly with other believers in a Bible teaching setting during the week.

APPENDIX B

The Judgment Seat (Bema) of Christ

or

The Doctrine of Rewards

One of the prominent doctrines of the New Testament is the Doctrine of Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is a doctrine often ignored or, when taught, it is misrepresented because of the term "judgment" that is used in translating the Greek text. Commenting on this Samuel Hoyt writes:

Within the church today there exists considerable confusion and debate regarding the exact nature of the examination at the judgment seat of Christ. The expression "the judgment seat of Christ" in the English Bible has tended to cause some to draw the wrong conclusion about the nature and purpose of this evaluation. A common misconception which arises from this English translation is that God will mete out a just retribution for sins in the believer's life, and some measure of retributive punishment for sins will result (*Bibliotheca Sacra, Article by Samuel Hoyt, Electronia Media*).

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. 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:

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12).

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. Compare the following passages:

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Colossians 1:29 And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within 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.

The Meaning of the Judgment (Bema) Seat

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

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). The victor of a given event who participated according 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).

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*" (Samuel Hoyt, "The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective," Part 1, Bibliotheca Sacra, p. 37, January-March, 1980, *Electronic Media*). 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. Chafer and 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). (Lewis Sperry Chafer, Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scripture Simplified and Explained, rev. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 282.)

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." (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 4: Ecclesiology-Eschatology [Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948], p. 406.)

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 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Arguments or Reasons 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.
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--unboubtedly the result of rewards.
3. In 2 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 4:5, rewards are associated with "that day" and with the Lord's coming. Again, for the church this means the event of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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* and (4) compensation or rewards.

3.The Place of the *Bema*.

It will occur somewhere in the heavenlies in the presence of the Lord. This is evident from 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 4:2 and 19:8.

The Participants at the *Bema*.

1. All the passages dealing with the *bema* or rewards are addressed to believers or pertain to believers of the church (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12f; 2 Cor. 5:9f; 1 John 2:28; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 1 Tim. 6:18-19; Tit. 2:12-14 [note the emphasis on good works].

The resurrection program and the thus the reward of Old Testament saints occurs after the tribulation, after church age saints are already

seen in heaven and rewarded and returning with the Lord to judge the earth (cf. Rev. 19:8 with Dan. 12:1-2; Matt. 24).

2. All believers, regardless of their spiritual state, will be raptured and will stand before the *bema* to give an account of their lives and will either receive rewards or lose rewards. Some believe in a partial rapture theory which says that only those in fellowship with the Lord will be raptured as a form of punishment for their sin. As mentioned above, this is not only contrary to the finished work of Christ who once and for all paid the penalty for our sins, but it is contrary to the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11.

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

The context suggest that Paul has in mind the return of Christ for the church--the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The rapture is the means of our deliverance from the wrath he discusses in chapter 5:1-3. Further, the words "awake or asleep" of verse 10 refer to a spiritual or moral condition, not whether one is alive or dead when Christ returns as in 4:13-14. This is clear from both the context of 5:4-8 and by the fact he changed the words he used for sleep. He used the Greek *katheudo* in 5:10 rather than *koimao*, the word he used metaphorically in 4:13-14 of physical death. Though *katheudo* was used of physical sleep and even death, it was also commonly used of spiritual apathy or carnal indifference to spiritual matters, and this is clearly the context of chapter 5. The point, then, is this: Because of the perfect and finished nature of Christ's death (note the words "who died for us" of verse 10), whether we are spiritually alert or not, we will live together with Him through the rapture to face the examination of the *bema*.

The Examiner or Judge at the Bema.

This is none other than the Lord Jesus who is even now examining our lives and will bring to light the true nature of our walk and works when we stand before Him at the *Bema* (Rev. 1-2; 1 Cor. 4:5f; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 2:28. In Romans 14:10 the Apostle called this examining time the *Bema of God* while in 2 Corinthians 5:10 he called it the *Bema of Christ*. The Point: Jesus who is God is our examiner and rewarder.

The Purpose and Basis of the Bema.

The purpose and the basis is the most critical issue of all and brings us face to face with the practical aspects of the Bema. Some crucial questions are: Why are we brought before the Bema? Is it only for rewards or their loss? Will any punishment be meted out? Will there be great sorrow? What's the basis on which the Bema is conducted? Is it sin, good works, or just what?

The Problem:

Within the church, there exists a good deal of confusion and disagreement concerning the exact nature of the Bema. The use of the term "judgment seat" in most translations, ignorance of the historical and cultural background concerning the Bema, and foggy theology regarding the finished work of Christ have all contributed to several common misconceptions which, in one way or another, see God as giving out just retribution to believers for sin, or at least for our unconfessed sin.

Three Views of the Bema:

For a summary of three major views, let me quote Samuel L. Hoyt from *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

Some Bible teachers view the judgment seat as a place of intense sorrow, a place of terror, and a place where Christ display all the believer's sins (or at least those unconfessed) before the entire resurrected and raptured church. Some go even further by stating that Christians must experience some sort of suffering for their sins at the time of this examination.

At the other end of the spectrum another group, which holds to the same eschatological chronology, views this event as an awards ceremony. Awards are handed out to every Christian. The result of this judgment will be that each Christian will be grateful for the reward which he receives, and he will have little or no shame.

Other Bible teachers espouse a mediating position. They maintain the seriousness of the examination and yet emphasize the commendation aspect of the judgment seat. They emphasize the importance and necessity of faithful living today but reject any thought of forensic punishment at the *bema*. Emphasis is placed on the fact that each Christian must give an account of

his life before the omniscient and holy Christ. All that was done through the energy of the flesh will be regarded as worthless for reward, while all that was done in the power of the Holy Spirit will be graciously rewarded. Those who hold this view believe that the Christian will stand glorified before Christ without his old sin nature. He will, likewise, be without guilt because he has been declared righteous. There will be no need for forensic punishment, for Christ has forever borne all of God's wrath toward the believer's sins (*Hoyt, pp. 32-33*)

This last view I believe to be the one that is in accord with Scripture. Reasons for this will be set forth and developed as we study the nature, purpose, and basis for the Bema. But for now, lest we draw some wrong conclusions, we need to be ever mindful that God's Word clearly teaches there are specific and very serious consequences, both temporal and eternal, for sin or disobedience. Though we will not be judged in the sense of punished for sin at the Bema since the Lord has borne that for us, we must never take sin lightly because there are many consequences.

The Present Consequences of Sin or Disobedience

While the following is not exhaustive, it demonstrates that sin in the life of a believer is not small issue.

(1) *Loss of fellowship with the Lord.* Known sin in one's life causes a loss of intimate fellowship with the Lord with the consequent loss of His joy and peace (Ps. 32:3-4).

(2) *Divine Discipline From the Lord Here in Time.* We should not think of discipline as punishment. Discipline from God is the gracious work of a Father to train and develop His children. Sometimes this comes in the form of various kinds of testing, trials, failure, and predicaments which He uses to correct us, to train us, and, if we have been going our own stubborn way, to increase our misery. The goal, however, is always to bring us back to Him (Heb. 12:5-11). If the believer remains unrepentant, this can lead to the sin unto death as with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and some of the believers at Corinth who were failing to confess their sin and get right with the Lord (1 Cor. 11:28f; cf. also 1 John 5:16-17).

(3) *Loss of Power and Production.* When we fail to deal with our sinful ways through honest confession, we grieve the Spirit's person and

quench His power in our lives. This means that rather than operating by faith in God's provision, we end up operating in the energy of the flesh. We turn to our personal bag of tricks by which we seek to handle life (Gal. 3:1-5; 5:5-1-5; Jer. 2:12-13). This results in the works of the flesh and their awful and fruitless consequences (Gal. 5:19-21, 26). Without the abiding life, the life of faith and obedience to the Savior, we can do nothing (John 15:1-7).

(4) Loss of Opportunities. When we are in charge of our lives rather than the Lord, we become insensitive to people and opportunities of ministry--we lack vision. Carnal believers have no vision other than their own personal agendas and selfish goals (cf. Jn. 4:34f).

(5) Loss of Desire and Motivation for Service. Carnal believers are occupied and controlled by their own self-centered desires (Gal. 5:16f). Perhaps this is a good place to discuss the concept of selfishness and rewards for some see an appeal to rewards as selfish and therefore carnal.

Zane Hodges has some good thoughts on this concept:

Scripture does not teach us to be uninterested in our own happiness or well-being. The very desire to escape eternal damnation is a legitimate and urgent self-interest. The instinct to preserve our lives is the same. Nor are pleasure and enjoyment illegitimate experiences.

When God put Adam and Eve in the garden, He furnished them with "every tree . . . that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen. 2:9). They could enjoy themselves freely provided they abstained from eating from the one forbidden tree. Similarly, Paul tells rich people that "God . . . gives us richly all things *to enjoy*." (1 Tim. 6:17: italics added).

Selfishness ought not to be defined simply as the pursuit of our own self-interest. Instead, it should be defined as the pursuit of our self-interest *in our own way*, rather than in God's way. Since "love" is a preeminent virtue in Christianity, true selfishness often involves a pursuit of self-interest that violates the law of love (*Hodges, Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society, Autumn, 1991, p. 7*).

Self-interest in God's way is legitimate. Self-centeredness or selfishness is preoccupation with self at the expense of others and God's will in one's life. When Adam and Eve chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they acted in self-centered independence which was idolatry and sin. When they enjoyed each other and the fruit trees and blessings of the garden, they acted in their self-interest but they did so in dependence on and in obedience to the Lord.

(6) Broken relationships and disharmony. Carnality causes broken relationships and pain to those around us--our families, friends, associates, and co-workers in the body of Christ (Gal. 5:15; Heb. 12:15b).

(7) Loss of Physical Health and Vitality. Of course all sickness, weakness, or suffering is not a product of sin, but it can be and often is (1 Cor. 11:29-30; 1 John 5:16-17; Prov. 17:22; 14:30).

(8) Loss of Rewards at the Bema. 1 Cor 13:13-15: "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. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."

The Purpose of the Bema.

It is not punitive. It is not to judge believers for sin of any kind, confessed or unconfessed. "Scripture teaches that for the believer God's justice has already been fully and forever satisfied at the Cross in relation to the believer's sins. *If God were to punish the believer judicially for his sins for which Christ has already rendered payment, He would be requiring two payments for sin and would therefore be unjust.* Such a concept (punishment for sin) erroneously disparages the all-sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross" (Hoyt, pp. 33-34). Christ paid the penalty for the believer's pre- and post-conversion sins. The believer will forfeit rewards which he could have received, but he will not be punished in the judicial sense of "paying" for his sins."

Scripture teaches that all sins, both confessed and unconfessed, have been forgiven and taken care of by the work of Christ on the Cross so the Christian will never face those sins again at the judgment.

Key Scriptures:

The following verses demonstrate the basic principle of the complete and finished nature of Christ's Work:

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Romans 5:19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Colossians 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

These verses state the complete results or conclusion:

Hebrews 8:12 "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more."

Hebrews 10:17-18 "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.

Isaiah 44:22 "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (NASB)

Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

Isaiah 38:17 "Lo, for *my own* welfare I had great bitterness; It is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.

These verses show we cannot come into judgment. Why? Because Christ has born our judgment by being made a curse in our place:

Romans 5:1 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Question: Then why do we have to confess sin in this life? And why does God judge believers for unconfessed sin as with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 and some of the believers in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:28f?

Answer: Because this is a completely different matter.

(1) Unconfessed sin relates to fellowship in this life, not one's relationship or standing with God. Unconfessed sin stands as a barrier to fellowship with the Lord and His control over one's life. As

Amos 3:3 says, "can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Obviously the answer is no. Confession means we agree with God concerning our sin and want to get back under God's control. "Daily forgiveness of those who are within the family of God is distinguished from judicial and positional forgiveness which was applied forensically to all of a person's sins the moment he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Hoyt, p. 38). We need to distinguish between fellowship forgiveness and legal or forensic forgiveness that justifies us and gives us a standing before God through Christ.

Key Scriptures: Heb. 12:5f and 1 Cor. 11:28-32. These passages:

- Explain the nature of God's judgment of believers in this life. It is discipline designed to train and bring believers back to a walk with God.
- They teach us the basic cause of discipline is failure to examine and confess know sins because thT hinders our fellowship with God.
- "Condemned along with the world" in 1 Corinthians 11:32 most likely refers to the judgment of Rom. 1:24f, moral degeneration and the gradual breakdown in the moral fiber of men when they turn away from God. The same thing happens in the life of believers, but God brings discipline to stop the process.

(2) God does not judge us for our sin in the sense of making us pay the penalty for that sin.

Scripture teaches that Christ's death was all-sufficient, completely satisfying God's wrath toward sin in the believer. The question of sin in regard to God's justice has been forever satisfied in the mind of God by the all-sufficient sacrifice of His Son. The penalty for the believer's sins has been fully paid for by Christ, the believer's substitute. The Christian has been in court, condemned, sentenced, and executed in his substitute, Jesus Christ. God cannot exact payment for sins twice since payment has been fully and forever paid. The believer is seen by the Father as clothed in the righteousness of Christ. God can therefore find no cause for accusing the Christian judicially any more than He can find cause for accusing Jesus Christ. Therefore, at the judgment seat of Christ forensic punishment will not be meted out for the believer's sins (*Hoyt, p. 38*)

Rather, God disciplines us as a father disciplines his sons to bring us back into fellowship that we might be conformed to His Son. It is a family matter.

The Positive Aspects of the Bema

1. To evaluate the quality of every believer's work whether it is good or bad, i.e., acceptable and thus worthy of rewards, or unacceptable, to be rejected and unworthy of rewards. Actually an evaluation is going on every day by the Lord (cf. Rev. 2-3).
2. To destroy and remove unacceptable production portrayed in the symbols of wood, hay, and stubble. All sinful deeds, thoughts, and motives, as well as all good deeds done in the energy of the flesh will be consumed like wood, hay, and stubble before a fire because they are unworthy of reward. Why? This will be answered as we consider the basis on which rewards are given or lost.
3. To reward the believer for all the good he or she has done as portrayed by the symbols of gold, silver, and precious stones, that which is valuable and can stand the test of fire without being consumed.
4. Scriptures:

1 Cor. 3:13-15 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. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

"Evident" is *phaneros* which means "known, plain, visible, revealed as to its nature." "The day" refers to a day well known and refers to the day of the *bema* after the rapture of the church. "Declare it" is *deloo* which means "to make evident, clear." "Be revealed" is *apokalupto* and means "to unveil." "Test" is *dokimazo* and means "to test for the sake of approval." "The quality" is *hopoion*, a correlative and qualitative pronoun meaning "of what sort or kind."

1 Cor. 4:5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

"Bring to light" is *photizo*, "to bring to light, make visible." "Disclose" is *phaneroo*, "to manifest, reveal." The issue should be extremely clear from these two verses: The Lord will evaluate the quality and nature of every person's work. Compare also:

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.

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

The Negative Aspects of the Bema

There are a number of passages that refer to the negative aspects of the Bema which need to be mentioned and explained. In these passages we read such things as "give account of himself," "suffer loss," "shrink away from Him in shame," and "recompense for his deeds . . . whether good or bad."

Will believers experience shame, grief, remorse at the Bema? If so, how do we reconcile this with passages like Revelation 7:17, "God shall wipe away every tear from their eye," and Revelation 21:4, "and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away," or with Isaiah 65:17, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind"?

The negative effects involve the following:

1. The loss suffered in 1 Corinthians 3:15 refers to the loss of rewards, not salvation as the verse goes on to make clear. Please note that the clause "he shall suffer loss" would be better rendered "it (the reward) shall be forfeited."
2. The disqualification mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:27 means disqualified from rewards, not loss of salvation. This is clear from the context and the analogy to the Greek athletic games.
3. The "recompense" (NASB) or the "receive back" (KJV) of 2 Corinthians 5:10 refers to the dispensing of rewards or their loss. The verb used is *komizo* and means "to carry off safe," "to carry off as booty." In the middle voice as here, it meant "to bear for oneself" (Abott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 252), or "to receive back what is one's own" (Rienecker, p. 468). Compare Matthew 25:27 and Ephesians 6:8.
4. That dispensing of rewards is in view is also evident from the Greek words in 2 Corinthians 5:10 translated "good" (*agathos*--valuable

like good fruit) and "bad" (*phaulos*--unacceptable like rotten or spoiled fruit). The idea is not good in the sense of righteousness versus bad in the sense of evil or sinfulness. For those ideas Paul would have most likely used *kalos*, "good," and *kakos*, "evil." For good works, those valuable like good fruit, we will receive back rewards, but for bad works, those rotten and worthless, we will receive no rewards or the loss of rewards.

Illustration: This is no more a punishment than when a student turns in a worthless assignment and receives an F or a D. His poor work results in a just grade or recompense. This is what his work deserves. There used to be a sign in the registrar's office at Dallas Seminary which read, "Salvation is by grace. . . Graduation is by works."

5. 1 John 2:28. This verse undoubtedly refers to the Bema and shows there will be both boldness as a result of abiding, and shame before the Lord as a result of failing to abide.

"And now little children." John is writing to believers. This is his term of endearment for his readers as born again people.

"Abide in Him." "Abide" is a synonym for fellowship which is the subject of the book (1:3-7). It means to remain in Him from the standpoint of drawing on His life as the source of ours and then to obey Him out of that relationship of dependence. This is the basis of rewards or the cause of their loss, the abiding, Christ dependent life.

"So that" points us to the purpose, the return of the Savior and what it will mean.

"When He appears." Two things. (1) The "when" points to the imminency of the return of the Lord. It is literally "if He appears." The conditional clause does not question the reality of Christ's coming, only the time of it and thereby points to its imminency. (2) "Appears" refers to the rapture which leads quickly into the Bema.

"We may have confidence." "Confidence" is *parresia* and means "courage, boldness to speak." Point: Though none of are perfect or ever will be, still, faithfulness to abide and obey the Lord will give confidence of rewards.

"And not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (presence)."
Please note several things here.

(1) The verb is what we call in Greek an aorist subjunctive, and with the basic meaning of this verb, the grammar points to a future act, but not a continuous state. This in no way suggests a permanent condition. (2) The voice of the verb is passive. The subject receives the action, that is, he is made to feel shame. But how? (3) There are two views:

- The non-abiding believer is made to feel shame by the Lord, i.e., the Lord puts him to shame. This would be somewhat punitive and does not fit the concept of the Bema nor the promises of the Lord that we will not come into judgment.
- The non-abiding believer is made to feel shame by the revelatory nature of the event caused by his own awareness and realization of what his own failure and sin has caused him in terms of the loss of rewards and loss of glory to the Lord. But this will only be momentary or short lived at best in view of passages like Revelation 7:17; 21:4 and Isaiah 56:17.

Hoyt has a good summary of what this passage is talking about and involves:

The Bible suggests that there will be shame at the judgment seat of Christ to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the measure of unfaithfulness of each individual believer. Therefore it should be each believer's impelling desire to be well-pleasing to the Lord in all things. Although Christians apparently will reflect on this earthly life with some regret, they will also realize what is ahead for them in the heavenly life. This latter realization will be the source of boundless joy. English strikes a proper balance on this subject.

"Joy will indeed be the predominant emotion of life with the Lord; but I suspect that, when our works are made manifest at the tribunal, some grief will be mixed with the joy, and we shall know shame as we suffer loss. But we shall rejoice also as we realize that the rewards given will be another example of the grace of our Lord; for at best we are unprofitable servants" (E. Schuyler English, "The Church At the Tribunal," in *Prophetic Truth Unfolding Today*, ed. Charles Lee Feingberg [Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1968], p. 29)

The elements of remorse, regret, and shame cannot be avoided in an examination of the judgment seat of Christ. But this sorrow must be somewhat relative because even for the finest of Christians there will be some things worthy of unceasing remorse in the light of God's unapproachable holiness. This would mean that the finest of Christians could be sorrowful throughout eternity. However, this is not the picture that the New Testament gives of heaven. The overwhelming emotion is joyfulness and gratefulness. Although there is undeniably some measure of remorse or regret, this is not the overriding emotion to be experienced throughout the eternal state.

The emotional condition of the redeemed is that of complete and unending happiness. Emotion proceeds from the realization of facts in personal experience. Hope will at last become reality for all those who are delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-25). Elimination of the curse, pain and death will also remove sorrow, tears and crying (Rev. 21:4).(21)

The judgment seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To overdo the sorrow aspect of the judgment seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To underdo the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential. (*Samuel Hoyt, "The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective," Part 2, p. 131, Bibliotheca Sacra, Electronic Media*).

The Nature of the Rewards:

What are they and how are they described in Scripture? They are described in terms of generalities. What we know about rewards is given in terms that are more general than specific. These are:

1. **The Promise of Crowns.** This seems to be used as a symbol of victory, authority and responsibility.
2. **The Promise of Heavenly Treasure** (Matt. 6:20; 1Pet. 1:4). Stresses their eternal value and security.
3. **The Promise of Accolades or Commendations.** This is seen in those passages where a reward is administered in the form of something like "well done thou good and faithful servant . . ." (cf. Matt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17; 1 Cor. 4:5b).
4. **The Promises to Overcomers.** These could refer to special blessing of rewards to those believers who overcomer special trials and tests rather than a general promise to all believers. See Rev. 2:7; 2:11, 17, 26; etc.
5. **The Promise of Special Responsibilities and Authority of the Lord's Possessions** (cf. Matt. 19:28; 24:45-47; 25:21, 23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rev. 2:26).

Some Analogies to Consider.

1. **A Thanksgiving Dinner.** At a Thanksgiving dinner, each person eats a different amount, but each is satisfied. After our glorification,

there will be no sinful nature to produce envy, or jealousy, or resentment, or feelings of dissatisfaction. We will each be enthralled with God and our glorified state.

2. **A Bat Boy At the World Series.** Any young man who loves baseball would probably be thrilled to be a bat boy in the world series, but he would not be jealous or resentful because he was not one of the stars of the game. He would just be delighted to be there and do what he was doing.
3. **A Graduate At Commencement.** All the graduates are there and excited about graduating, yet at their time of rewards, some sorrow might be experienced, but it is quickly overcome by the joy of the event.
4. **Our Spiritual Gifts.** Our rewards may be likened to our spiritual gifts. Our rewards seem to primarily be a matter of responsibility and maybe opportunities, but they will not be like badges or medals we wear as in the military. Remember that all of our crowns will be cast at the feet of Christ, for only He is worthy (Rev. 4:10-11). Also, Matthew 25:21, 23 and Luke 19:17-19 show us our rewards consist of authority over either many things or many cities. They may include galaxies of the universe. All believers will live in the millennium and in eternity with the Lord. Some will reign with Him, but, because of loss of rewards, evidently some will not.
5. **In Scripture,** the church is viewed as the heavenly kingdom and a universal priesthood. This may indicate something of our authority. We may rule over galaxies, celestial bodies, the heavens, and definitely over angels, and the world (cf. 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 4:8).
6. **Israel** is the earthly kingdom and will undoubtedly have authority over portions and sections of the millennial kingdom and the eternal kingdom as emphasized in Matt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17-19; and Dan. 7:18, 22, 27).

The Crowns of the New Testament

The Words Used For Crowns

1. ***Stephanos.*** This was the victor's crown, the wreath given to the victorious athlete before the judge at the Bema. It is the word used of

the crowns promised to believers for faithfulness in the Christian life.

2. **Diadem.** This was the royal crown, the crown of a king. It is used of the seven diadems of the Beast in Revelation 12:3 and 13:1. But, to stress that Christ is King of Kings, this word is also used of the many diadems the Lord will wear at His return (Rev. 19:12).

The Principle. The Lord Jesus is the victor, and our victory is really His victory which is appropriated by faith. Crowns are given as rewards for faithfulness to appropriate God's grace and Christ's victory in the Christian life. They remind us of our responsibility to abide in the vine.

The Crowns and Their Significance.

1. **The Crown of Thorns** (Matt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2, 5).
Speaks of Christ's work on the cross and stands for His victory over sin, Satan, and death.
2. **The Incorruptible Crown** (1 Cor. 9:25). Two things: (a) This describes all the crowns. It contrasts our crowns with the temporal and temporary treasure of this life. (b) It is also a special crown given for faithfulness in running the race and exercising self-control in order to serve the Lord and finish the race.
3. **The Crown of Exultation or Rejoicing** (1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1).
This crown is a reward given for witnessing, follow-up, and ministry to others. In one sense, the Thessalonians will be Paul's crown, and the effect at the Bema and throughout eternity will be rejoicing or exultation over their presence in heaven.

But what did Paul mean by this? In view of his use of "crown" (*stephanos*, the victor's wreath) in other places, and the fact believers will cast their crowns before the Lord (Rev. 4:10), Paul may also have in mind a personal crown or reward that he will receive because of their presence at the return of the Lord. Though, in this passage the Apostle does not say he would receive a crown, this is suggested, if not here certainly in other passages. Though some of them were not living as they should, looking ahead and seeing them in glory brought joy and would bring great rejoicing.

4. **The Crown of Life** (Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). This crown is given for enduring testings (trials) and temptation. The crown is not eternal life which is a gift through faith alone in Christ alone (Jn. 4:10; Rom. 3:24; 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8), but a reward for enduring trials and overcoming temptation.
5. **The Crown of Righteousness** (2 Tim. 4:8). This crown is a reward given for faithfulness to use our gifts and opportunities in the service of the Lord and for loving His appearing. Note that these two things go together. To love His appearing is to live in the light of it.
6. **The Crown of Glory** (1Pet. 5:4). This crown is a reward promised to Elders for faithfulness in the discharge of their responsibilities in shepherding the people.
7. **The Casting of Crowns** (Rev. 4:10, 11). Because Christ alone is worthy and because we can only be fruitful when we abide in Him allowing His life to fill ours, we will all cast our crowns before Him in recognition that all we have done is by His grace.
8. **The Many Crowns or Diadems** (Rev. 19:12). The crowns of royalty which stand for Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lord who alone has the right to rule and judge the world.

APPENDIX C

An Overview of the Tribulation

I. Definition of the Tribulation

Biblically, the word "tribulation" comes from the Greek word *thilipsis* which means "affliction, distress." In the Bible it is used (1) in general of any kind of testing or affliction or distress which people experience throughout life, and especially of the church and her problems in this world (John 16:33; Rom. 2:9; 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 1 Thess. 1:6; Rev. 1:9; 2:9,10). But (2) Scripture also uses it of a very special and future time of tribulation that is to come upon the whole earth (Matt. 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 13:19, 24; Rev. 2:22; 7:14). As a result, Bible students have spoken of a time called "the Tribulation" as that specific future time of trouble as a judgment from God that will come upon the entire world. It will become unprecedented in its affliction as suggested by the

description, "the Great Tribulation" (Matt. 24:21), and it will be culminated by the personal return of Jesus Christ to earth (Matt. 24:29-31).

II. The Source of The Tribulation

Some today refuse to distinguish between the general tribulations of this age that the church will endure, and the unique, universal, and unprecedented Tribulation that will come. They insist that the tribulation is not the judgment of God, but comes from man and Satan bringing persecution to all. They often see any future tribulation as merely the Devil's wrath poured out against Christians.

Still others today see only the very tail end of the events of Revelation to be the outpouring of the judgment of God and assert that the rest of the events constitute only the wrath or wickedness of man. But the point of Scripture is that even this is a part of God's judgment upon a world that has sought its answers apart from the true God. The Tribulation will witness Satan's wrath and the persecutions of his man, the Beast (Rev. 12:12-17; 13:7). But Scripture shows that even this is a manifestation of God's wrathful judgment that He will cause to rain on the earth. The clear emphasis of Scripture is that the events of Revelation 6-19 constitute a time of God's special judgment poured out upon the earth. It is from God--a time of divine wrath.

Key Scriptures: Isaiah 24:1; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:18; Revelation 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:7, 10, 19; 15:4, 7; 16:1, 7, 19, 19:1-2.

III. The Participants of the Tribulation

Since the church is gone, caught up to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-18), the Tribulation begins with only unbelievers. It is particularly a time of judgment on "those who dwell upon the earth" which seems to be a technical term in Revelation meaning "earth dweller," a reference to those who have no interest in the things of God (cf. Rev. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8 and Isa. 24:17). Soon, however, 144,000 will come to Christ from the nation of Israel and will evidently become the evangelists of the world who lead people to Christ from every tongue, tribe, and nation (Rev. 7:1-9).

IV. The Nature and Character of the Tribulation

- A. Though the Tribulation begins as a time of peace, it soon becomes a time of unprecedented trouble--Joel 2:2; Matt. 24:21. Everything about this time will be unprecedented (Zeph. 1:15).
- B. It is a time of God's wrath or indignation and the vindication of God's holiness--Zeph. 1:15, 18; Rev. 6:17; I Thess. 1:10; Rev. 14:7, 10; 19:2). God's wrath against man's sin and rebellion will be withheld no longer.
- C. It is a day of utter darkness, gloom and extreme cloudiness (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15).
- D. It is a day of destruction and global catastrophes (Joel 1:15; 2:3; I Thess. 5:3; Rev. 6-19).
- E. It is a day of extreme lawlessness, sin and demonic activity (Rev. 9:20-21; II Thess. 2:12).
- F. It is a day of extreme deception and delusion (II Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 9:1f; 13:2-3, 11f; Dan. 8:24f) This is caused by (1) the removal of the church and (2) increase in demonic activity.
- G. It is a time of death (Rev. 6: 9:15, 18; 11:13). Large portions of the populations of the earth will be wiped out suddenly, both human and animal.
- H. It is a time of utter negative volition and rebellion (II Thess. 2:10f; Rev. 6:14f; 9:20; 11:10, 18).
- I. It is a time of internationalism: religiously (Rev. 17:); politically (Rev. 13: 17:); economically (Rev. 18:); militarily (Joel 3:2, 9-14; Rev. 17:).
- J. It is a time of extreme anti-Semitism (Rev. 12; Matthew 24:9, 13f).
- K. It is a time of unprecedented apostasy and blasphemy against God (Rev. 11:1f; 13:1f; II Thess. 2:3f).
- L. It is a time of martyrdom of believers (Rev. 6:9; 7:14f).
- M. It is a time of global and universal war, human and angelic (Rev. 6:2-4; 16:14; 19:14f; Joel 3:2, 9f; Rev. 12:7).
- N. It is a time of unprecedented evangelism (Rev. 7:9; Matt. 24:14).

V. The Names of the Tribulation

Terms used of this period. Some of these suggest the judgmental character of this period.

- A. Jacob's Trouble or distress (Jer. 30:7).
- B. Daniel's Seventieth Week (Daniel 9:24-27).
- C. A time of trouble or distress (Daniel 12:1).
- D. The Great Day, the one of their wrath (Rev. 6:17).
- E. The hour of testing which shall try the whole earth (Rev. 3:10).
- F. The indignation (Isa. 26:26).
- G. The Great Tribulation (Matt 24:21).
- H. The Day of the Lord (Joel 1:15; 2:1; I Thess. 5:2).

In Scripture, the Day of the Lord is often associated with this time of great judgment which God will pour out on earth against Israel and the nations, but it is also associated with the time of millennial blessings which follow when the Lord will rule on earth. Compare Isaiah 13:6-22 = judgment; but 14:1-3 the result which is peace, Israel regathered and in blessing. (Joel 1:15f 2:1f, 12-18f; 3:1f).

VI. The Length of the Tribulation

Daniel 9:24-27 shows us that the Tribulation, Daniel's Seventieth week, is seven years. This is further verified by the time periods of Revelation which divide the tribulation into two periods of three and one-half years (Rev. 11:2-3; 13:5; 12:6; Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:14).

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