

JUDGMENT DAY

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST (2)

“ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2 Cor. 5:10 NKJV



Review

Everyone is appointed a day in which he or she will bow before the Lord and be judged/examined. Three distinct judgments are in the future. The judgment to which a person will go, whether he or she likes it or not, depends upon the age in which the person lived and whether he or she was a believer. Jesus Christ is the Judge for every human being; He will be fair and just. The Judgment Seat of Christ is the judgment believers in the Age of Grace will attend, whether they have died or are alive. Unbelievers will be judged at a different time. The JSC is in heaven immediately after the Rapture. We will be given new, glorified bodies when we are taken up at the Rapture. The JSC is about rewards and praise; a person's sins (even those done in secret) are not the issue. God's love and grace are inconsistent with the notion of reviewing our past, hidden sins. The JSC and Rapture are events that should cause no fear or worry.

INTRODUCTION

This study will present what happens at the JSC. Everyone at the JSC is saved and is there to be examined for rewards. We are given rewards and praised, but for what? Will our bad deeds be weighed against our good deeds to determine our rewards? Are our rewards based upon how well we followed certain rules of do's and don'ts (don't drink, smoke, cuss, dance, chew, or run around with those that do)? The most important item to discuss is the pesky issue of our past lives. The Bible

mentions our good and bad, and the hidden things of darkness, in relationship to our appearing before Him. A casual reading of the Bible seems to support the view our secrets sins are brought into the open. Yet, how can that be true if we are already forgiven and justified? It seems there is terrible misunderstanding as to what the Bible really is teaching, and you may be surprised to learn the basis for your rewards.

BIBLE TRUTH

What Are Our Rewards?

In the Roman world, the winner of a sporting contest was often given a garland or wreath as a public honor. The Apostle Paul uses that picture of public honor in reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ—a place for deciding the rewards a believer is to receive. On earth, contestants win a corruptible crown; in contrast, our heavenly crowns will be eternal and imperishable, **"For everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown"** (1 Cor. 9:25). The nature of these imperishable crowns is not as clear as we wish, but surely the Lord knows what is best, most esteemed, and of lasting value. The Bible does indicate our everlasting crowns relate to righteousness, rejoicing, ruling, praise, and so on.

The word crown is figurative for a deeper spiritual reality; one such reality is righteousness. **"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"** (2 Tim. 4:8). We see that anyone who loves His appearing will receive this crown. Paul mentions another crown, a crown of rejoicing, based upon the people who trusted in Christ through his ministry, **"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy"** (1 Thes. 2:19-20). Our figurative crowns, or rewards, also relate to receiving authority to rule and reign over the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3). A fantastic reward is each person will receive praise from God: **"Then each one's praise will come from God"** (1 Cor. 4:5b).

There is no greater feeling than when a loved one or authority figure gives a person praise. In Heaven, the object of our love and the Supreme Authority, gives us praise. There are, no doubt, many more rewards than

indicated above, but this example gives you an idea of what believers receive. When you think about it, this is exactly what we have always wanted: *eternal life, righteousness, glory, joy, authority to rule and reign, praise...*³. God gives us precisely what will provide satisfaction, contentment, value, and joy in every aspect of our eternal lives. He gives us an eternity of peace; enables us to be forever full of joy; assures us a position of great authority and accomplishment; makes certain our lives have real importance and worth; and, on top of it all, the Almighty gives us praise.

The Bad Things We Have Done

The purpose of the JSC is found in 2 Cor. 5:10: **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"** (also see Rom. 14:10). The phrase, "the things *done* in the body," is generally understood to be our lives upon the earth, perhaps specifically referring to what we have done in the Body of Christ—the body of believers. The good things we have done will receive rewards. The real stickler in this verse is that some of what we do is good and some appears to be bad. Does that mean God will punish us for those bad things, or perhaps take a reward away for each bad thing done?

The reference to "good or bad" certainly seems to imply we will be held accountable in some manner for our sins, that is, our sins are forgiven but we have to pay for their consequences by loss of reward in Heaven. It is hard to grasp how they can be forgiven, to be remembered no more, yet there are consequences. Heaven is not like earth, where we can forgive someone but there may still be civil-legal consequences. Similarly on earth, we can be forgiven by God, but still suffer the earthly

³ Our rewards are given in Heaven. Earthly Kingdom believers (non-Age of Grace) have their rewards preserved in Heaven now; they will be given out at the First Resurrection on earth. The FR rewards are much like ours, see the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-11): comfort, inheritance, righteousness, mercy, seeing God, and become sons.

consequences of our sins: for example, if our sin resulted in a venereal disease. However, any consequences for sins in Heaven, at the final reckoning, are a moot issue; there are none! All our sins were placed upon the Savior to be remembered no more.

All individuals at the JSC have had all their sins forever forgiven when they became saved on earth. Paul made it clear that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1); and Christ stated that those who believe in Him would never come into judgment (*krisis*). Charles Baker explains this beautifully, *"The plain teaching of Scripture is that the penal judgment for sin will never fall upon the believer, for the simple reason that it has already fallen in all of its completeness upon the believer's substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer will never be brought into judgment, such as the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 21:11-15, where the penalty of sin is meted out upon unbelievers, and where the consequences of the judgment will be eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. The whole purpose of the death of Christ, as far as the believer is concerned, was to deliver him from such judgment."* (1)

At the JSC, the matter of sin was settled long ago; our sins were completely washed away, forever, by the blood of Jesus Christ. To remember them again in judgment would violate God's own Word. First Corinthians 13:5 says that true (*agape*) love keeps no accounts of evil or list of wrong things we have done. The consequences of our sins cannot be what 2 Corinthians 5:10 refers to, for to hold consequences against us means our sins are not really forgiven and that God does keep a list of them somewhere.

The word "bad" in 2 Corinthians 5:10, can mean "of no value." Things of no value are not necessarily sinful. Accordingly, the Lord will be judging the events of our lives to determine those that were good and those that were of no value. The final phase of 1 Corinthians 4:5 reinforces this interpretation, not mentioning loss, harm, or shame; but, **"...and then shall every man have**

praise of God." If these verses were referring to sin or bad deeds, then the idea of receiving praise would be inappropriate. So, the good things we have done garner a reward and the things of no value yield nothing; but we all will end up with some reward and are praised. The things of no value can be the things we do every day: go to school, do housework, mow the lawn, and so forth. These things are not bad, they just have no value in the eternal perspective. In fact, these things are necessary for our life here on earth; they have temporal value but no eternal value. As we study further, we will see rewards can be gained during the times we did these everyday things.

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone build on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:11-15). Our judgment day has to do with rewards from God for our service for Him. For those items in our lives found to be good, we will receive reward. The term "the fire will test" refers to a refiner, who would apply heat to a mixture of metal ore to cause the pure, precious metal to melt and separate from the dross. Separating precious metal from the no-value items (dross) is an ancient refining technique and is referred to as a refiner's fire. Rock is of no value in Heaven, but of considerable earthly value for a building material. Rock is not bad, it just has no value in Heaven. The loss suffered is the loss of a possible reward, not a loss due to punishment for our sins.

Christ will judge all our lives and try our works, deeds, attitudes, heart's desires, and so forth, and in the process will determine what is pure metal and what is dross. The dross does not have to be sin, but merely that which was of no eternal value for God's purpose. Many of the actual

things we do every day are of no heavenly value; however, heavenly value can be found in our mental attitude while doing them. For example, mowing the lawn or doing household duties are of no heavenly value; however, if those duties are done as unto God (with praise and thanks in the heart) there is value and reward. Christ will judge every part of our lives, knowing all things perfectly, since nothing is hid from Him. There will be things we have done that we thought were for Christ, but they may be of no eternal value if we secretly did them for ourselves. Contrarily, everyday things may be rewarded if they were done with a Christ-like mind.

Basis of Rewards

In 1 Corinthians 4:5, we see another supposed reference to the notion that our sins are considered at the JSC: **"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden thing of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."** At first glance, this verse seems to be saying that at the JSC a person's sins will be judged, and done fairly, because the Lord knows all the hidden things in our lives; so, we best shape up. However, this is not what the text is teaching. God will not be unearthing the dirt of our past, the "hidden things of darkness." Instead, the context indicates the hidden things are those things in our lives that others did not see but that were really done for Christ. The "good" hidden things will be revealed at the JSC. Pastor C. R. Stam grasped this truth and stated it well,

Then the ... lady, serving Christ as she can, but all unnoticed; that ... man, poor in this world's goods, but living consistently for the Lord; that person generally considered odd, but breathing love for Christ, will all be recognized and honored with "praise" and rewards" (cf. I Cor. 3:14; II Cor. 5:10). For then the Lord will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" and will manifest the inner motives of our hearts. (2)

The JSC is the great equalizer, since there is no respect of persons. Some receive praise on earth for all they do for Christ, but in Heaven He will bring to light the hidden things that were done in secret. Those who did not seem to do much on earth may be those highly rewarded in Heaven. We could not see the motives of their hearts, their attitudes, or the degree Christ was able to transform their minds, but the Lord did. He will reveal all those hidden things and properly reward those people. A person's rank, intelligence, privilege, gender, race ... mean nothing. Those who had menial jobs, low rank, limited capabilities (handicapped), denied basic human rights, and who were not allowed to hold high church offices, will be judged equitably with those who had just the opposite. At the JSC, the pure gold relates to the attitude of a person's heart and the degree the Holy Spirit was able to conform a person to Christ.

God inspired Paul to write, and his writings are God's commands to us today (1 Thes. 4:2; 2 Thes. 3:4,6,10,12). Paul wrote, **"...that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord"** (1 Cor. 14:37). One such command is we are to follow, or imitate, Paul: **"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"** (1 Cor. 11:1). Following a man seems very odd, but that is what Scripture says (1 Cor. 4:16, 17). We are commanded to follow Paul because he knew the *risen, heavenly Lord* (Gal. 1:12, 17), and that is Whom we are to follow today (2 Cor. 5:16). We are to imitate Paul, thereby assuring that we are following the risen Lord. Following the Lord in this manner in no way denies Christ's earthy life or the importance of it; however, our relationship with the Lord is enhanced when it is based upon His present status as Head of the Body (of believers) and the Lord of Heaven. In connection with our study, we want to know from the Bible what the hidden things of darkness are, and Paul helps us see what they are. He gives many examples of his struggles, and his frame of mind, often hidden from public knowledge (2 Corinthians 6:3-13). First Corinthians 4:12-13 is another example of Paul and his associates as it relates to the hidden things of darkness.

- when they were reviled (abusive language), they blessed

- when they were persecuted, they were patient and endure it
- when they were slandered and defamed, they answered softly and encouraged others

Now we see more clearly what the hidden things are darkness are; they are the good motives and attitudes that were generally behind the scenes, hidden from view. It is these unknown, hidden motives and attitudes that will be rewarded. Jesus revealed such motives when He mentioned the widow in Mark 12:43-44: she gave little, but with the right motive. Paul also mentions the attitude or motive when giving, as the "purpose of the heart" (2 Cor. 9:7). It is not how much money a person gives, but his or her purpose in giving. Thus, we can gain rewards at any time, doing anything, based upon our attitudes, motives, purposes, the fruit of the Spirit.... The things that garner reward are matters related to the disposition of our mind and heart, which can be at work while doing the things of "no value." **"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"** (1 Cor. 10:31). Everyday duties are not rewarded (they are wood, hay, stubble), but our motives and attitude while doing them can be pure gold. Thus, digging a ditch is not rewarded because the act is of no eternal value; however, the desire of the heart of the digger is of great value, hidden from everyone but God. The inescapable conclusion is that a person can gain eternal rewards while digging.

In general, our rewards are for: soul winning (1 Thes. 2:19); being faithful stewards (1 Cor. 4:1-5); enduring hardship (2 Tim. 2:11-12); living a transformed life (1 Thes. 4 & 5; 1 Cor. 4:11-16), and so forth. The value of anything we do relates to the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (1 Cor. 4:11-16). The actual thing done is often of little consequence, if it is done with a Christ-like mind. Anyone exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit will not be self-centered or absorbed with personal satisfaction. Wasted time and time used for selfish purposes, even if done with a good attitude, are wood, hay and stubble. The Lord will sort this all out. What is of consequence is the manner in which the Lord is able to change us on the

inside, so that we have the correct motives and values. Our work and deeds do garner some rewards, but it seems God is primarily interested in how the Holy Spirit was able to work in our lives making us more like Christ. It is the Spirit's action within us that produces the pure gold and silver at the JSC.

It is not so much what we do for the Lord, but what He is able to do in our lives to make us more like Christ.

Rewards, to some extent, are based upon what we do, and to a greater extent on what He can do through us. Primarily they are based upon the degree He is able to change us on the inside, to make us conformable to Christ. Accordingly, rewards are not based upon following human rules of do's and don'ts. The fact a person does not drink, cuss, dance, smoke, chew, or run around with those who do, means nothing. A person is rewarded for being Christ-like, for good things he or she has done, and for the motives of the heart; not for what he or she did not do.

Speculation on How Judgment Happens

This section is outside the box, and presented merely to create additional thoughts on the JSC. The issue is how judgment takes place, that is, does Christ meet with each of us individually, does He meet with various group(s), or does He meet with one huge collective group? This sounds very weird, but it may be interesting to some.

We like to think of Christ spending personal time with each believer: welcoming, reviewing his or her personal life (Rom. 14:12), presenting rewards, explaining what will occur in Heaven, introducing us to saints like Abraham..... The complicating factor is time. We know nothing about time in Heaven, nor do we understand omnipresence. In Heaven, one day could be a thousand earth years, and vice versa. What we do know is that Christ's Second Coming requires that He be back on earth seven-plus years after the Rapture. However, does

omnipresence mean He can be in Heaven with us and on the earth destroying His enemies at the same time?

The author estimated the number of people who potentially will have been saved during the Age of Grace. The calculations and estimated number of believers will not be shown, lest they become a standard, or a bone of contention. Based upon the estimate of those saved (a conservative estimate), and seven years earth's time to meet with us (working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year), the time He can spend with each of us is shockingly small. He could only spend less than 1/5 of a second (0.2 seconds) with each person.

Perhaps in Heaven's time the JSC will be completed in a wink of earth's time. However, if earth's time is applicable, then there is nowhere near sufficient time for one-on-one meetings with the Lord. Is it possible, He may meet with us in a group(s), reward us, show us around, and so forth, but, though His omnipotence, we will experience that as a one-on-one event? We know the omniscient One has this perfectly planned, so we can be at ease. Whatever and however it occurs, it will be fantastic!

CONCLUSIONS

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, our lives will be examined for the good and bad things we have done. The word bad in connection to the things we have done (2 Cor. 5:10), refers to things "of no value," like mowing the lawn or making a meal. The things of no value are not necessarily sinful. In 1 Corinthians 4:5, the hidden things of darkness are the hidden things (in the dark) of our lives no one knew about, which were good. God will reveal hidden motives, purposes, and attitudes. We will be praised by Christ at the JSC, as He reveals these unknown, but good, things of our lives and rewards them. Thus, a person can gain eternal rewards while doing things of no eternal value on earth. Everyday duties are not rewarded (they are wood, hay, and

stubble), but our motives and attitude while doing them can be pure gold. Our work and deeds do garner rewards, but it seems God is primarily interested in our attitudes, motives, and purposes, which reflect the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The rewards a believer receives are of great eternal value, above and beyond what we could hope. Thus, we will be at peace with God, forever full of joy, enabled to hold a position of great authority with true accomplishment, have real importance and value, and, on top of it all, the Almighty God will give us praise.

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References

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