

**I Corinthians Lesson # 7**  
**The Judgment of Believers**  
**Pentwater Bible Church**  
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After the rapture of the Church there will be a judgment of the Saints. It is also called the Judgment Seat of Christ. (Bema Seat) Today will establish several important concepts then provide a thorough exposition of our text in I Corinthians 3:10-15 where we left off last session. It is important to realize that we will receive a judgment by the Lord Jesus.

**The Judgment Seat of the Christ**

First Corinthians chapter three has a very vivid picture of the Judgment Seat of Christ. This occurs to the invisible Church. The unbelievers will receive their punishment in varying degrees according to their works at the Great White Throne Judgment. That one will occur after the 1,000-year reign and just before the Eternal Order is established. The Judgment Seat of The Messiah, a judgment of the believer's works, not his or her sins.

First we must establish the timing of the Judgment. It is in conjunction with the Rapture of the Church.

The earliest indication of a pretribulational Rapture is found in Luke 21:34-37.

*Luke 21:34-37*

*And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and [so] that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall **it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth**. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye **may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man**. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called [the mount] of Olives.*

Three important concepts the Lord is emphasizing to us.

1. The Great Tribulation will affect everybody who is on the earth.
2. Some will be worthy to escape the Tribulation.
3. The escapees will stand before the Son of Man (Jesus).

After describing the terrible events of the Tribulation, Jesus states that it will come upon all them that dwell on the face of the earth. In other words nobody who lives on the earth at that time can escape the calamities of the Tribulation. Yet there is *one way* of escaping all these things that shall come to pass but *not* by remaining on the earth. In order to be able to escape all these things one *must* be a believer. This means escaping is

to stand before the Son of Man, a standing that must happen at a place off the earth, for there is no escape on the earth. That is exactly what happens to believers that are Raptured off the earth: They stand before the Son of Man.

Jesus The Christ has already taken the punishment, which is coming on the world, for the believer. If we believe, *we don't suffer* any punishment (Rom 8:1) and He takes us to be with Him prior to the Tribulation.

As already indicated by Luke 21:34-36, the result of the Rapture is *to stand before the Son of Man*. This is a judgment that will take place in Heaven after the Rapture of the Church. (See the attached Chart) Three passages deal with this particular judgment. In the first passage, Romans 14:10-12, Paul simply states the fact that such a judgment will take place.

*Romans 14:10-12*

*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

*For it is written, [As] I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

This is also known as the “bema” seat of Christ after the Greek word for judgment in this passage (Strong’s #968). Gallio, the brother of Seneca, was proconsul at Corinth. The seat from which Gallio sat at the athletic events was called the *Bema* seat. This is the name that Paul uses to describe Christ’s final judgment of believers (I Cor 3; II Cor 5).

The second passage is II Corinthians 5:10 which provides the basis for the judgment:

*II Corinthians 5:10*

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad.*

The basis of this judgment will be the believer’s works done in the body since he or she became a believer. It is *not* the believer’s sins which were settled at the cross, *and there is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:1) This is not a question of the believer’s sins, but a matter of reward on the basis of the believer’s deeds. The interesting contrast we see between the believers judgment and the unbelievers is:

1. Believers-On the way to Paradise- Judged for the extent of their rewards.
2. Unbelievers-On the way to Hell- Judged for the extent of their punishment.

The destination of each group is decided before death. It is only a decision of the extent of rewards or punishment when they get to the other side.

The third and most detailed passage that deals with this judgment is I Corinthians 3:10-15:

*I Corinthians 3:10-15*

*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

In verses 10-11, Paul again points out that the basis of the judgment is the works of the believer. This is portrayed as building on a foundation that has already been laid; the judgment is based on *how* one has built on this foundation (Jesus the Christ).

Furthermore, in verse 12, this judgment of works will not be based upon quantity, but upon quality. It will not be a question as to *how much* gold, silver, costly stones or wood, hay, stubble; but was it gold, silver, or precious stones, or *was it* wood, hay or stubble?

It is a matter of quality and not of quantity. The concern of this judgment is whether or not the believer followed what God's will was for him. If a believer is doing the will of the Lord, obeys His commandments, and fulfills the ministry for which he received his spiritual gifts, then he is building on the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones. But if not then he is building with wood, hay and stubble. While the believer's sins themselves are not brought out in this judgment, they do play an indicting role in the judgment. During the period of time the believer is living in unconfessed sin he is building with wood, hay and stubble, and not with gold, silver and precious stones. Thus there are severe consequences for the believer to living in sin. They will affect his or her position of authority during the 1,000 Kingdom where Christ runs the government (upon His shoulders) from David's Throne in Jerusalem.

In verse 13, the means of testing is said to be fire. When fire is applied to wood, hay or stubble, they are burned up and only ashes remain. But if fire is applied to gold, silver or precious stones they become refined and more pure. So some believers will find all their works burned up, and others will merely see them refined. Finally, in verses 14-15, the results of the judgment are given. In verse 14, those who built with gold, silver and precious stones will find their works still remaining, but purified after the fire has been applied. Thus, these will receive a reward. In verse 15, Paul states the result of those who have built with wood, hay and stubble. They will all be burned up. Hence, he or she will suffer loss. But, the loss is merely one of rewards and authority, nothing more. He or she will not be punished for his sins any more than a runner in a race is punished for not coming in first. But does lose out on this reward. Lest anyone concludes that he or she loses their salvation the text states in no uncertain terms, but he himself *shall be saved*. His works do not determine his salvation. His salvation is assured for he trusted in the Messiah, and salvation is by grace through faith apart from works (Eph 2:8-9). But he will spend the entire Kingdom period with nothing to show for his spiritual life.

How does God expect us to affectively carry out our spiritual gifts?

He has commanded us to work within a context of the local group of believers.

The local assembly is where we worship, fellowship and administer our spiritual gifts to be part of the body of believers and complete the plan that Christ gave for building up the body. It can be an assembly in a home. We are simply not to forsake the fellowship of the believers. The local assembly can be a home church. It does not have to be a particular place. The early church met in homes. It simply means we become accountable with other believers and to God through those who teach and administer God's Word. Using their gifts they have spiritual authority over the believers for guidance and they are accountable to God for that.

*Hebrews 13:7*

*Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

*Hebrews 13:17*

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

We are to join a local body of believers and put ourselves under the authority of the teachers of God's Word only if their manner of living or their conduct is matching what they are teaching. If they are living inconsistently with what they are telling us to do then we must find another body of believers to join.

The process for putting ourselves under the authority (rule) is by *committing* to a group for learning and growing in God's Word as well as spiritual nourishment, exercising our spiritual gifts and accountability. It is mandatory for God's people to effectively carry out His will for us as believers exercising our Spiritual Gifts. We have been given spiritual gifts as members of the Body of Christ. In other words you can't stand on the sidelines and expect Christ to provide you with crowns at the judgment.

How do we know that God has given this authority to the local church to administer the body?

*Matthew 16:18-19*

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

After Jesus asked the Apostles who do the people say that I am, He specifically asks the Apostles "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answers that Jesus is the Messiah or Christ in Greek. The subject in context is Jesus the Christ or Messiah.

Christ then goes on to say that God revealed it to him and furthermore praises

Peter (Petras Gr Masculine meaning pebble) and upon this rock (petra, Gr fem meaning The Rock) I will build my Church etc.

Verse 19 Christ states that He will give unto The Apostles the Keys of The Kingdom which is the authority to administer God's will which has already been commanded in Heaven. The Greek aorist tense is used here so the verse should read:

**and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven**

### **The Rewards: (Crowns)**

I Corinthians 3:10-15 says nothing about the nature of the reward, but other passages do. They speak of these rewards as being crowns. The Greek language has two words that are translated as crowns. One is a *Diadem*, which is attributed to royalty, and the other is a *stephanos*, which is given for example to a victor in a race. Jesus wears the *Diadem*. The *stephanos* are the kinds of crowns that we will be given for the quality of exercising our spiritual gifts here on earth as a member of the local body of believers. We will have overcome the spiritual warfare and are now crowned at the Judgment Seat of The Messiah.

There five such crowns mentioned in Scripture.

The first crown is called the incorruptible crown in.

*II Corinthians 9:24-25*

*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

This is a crown given to those who exercise self-control and gain the mastery and victory in the spiritual life. It is for those who gained the victory over the old man, the old sin nature. It is for those who have learned to live a Spirit-controlled life.

The second crown is called the crown of rejoicing:

*I Thessalonians 2:19*

*For what [is] our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? [Are] not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

This is the crown give to those who win souls for Jesus the Lord. It is a crown available to all those who do the work of evangelism, and through the fruits of their labors are seen in people coming to the Lord through them.

The third crown is called The Crown of Righteousness

*II Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

This is a crown for those who have kept the faith both doctrinally and morally in spite of adverse circumstances. It is a crown given to those *who love His appearing*, those who look longingly for the return of the Messiah. *Looking for His return is the result of sound doctrine and keeping the faith.* A life lived in conformity with the New Testament will include the expectation of the soon return of the Lord. For such, there is *a crown of righteousness.*

#### The Fourth crown is Called the Crown of Life

It is mentioned in two passages:

*James 1:12*

*Blessed [is] the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*

Here it is give for those who endure trials

Rev 2:10 it is given for those who suffer martyrdom for their faith:

*Revelation 2:10*

*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

#### The Fifth Crown is The Crown of Glory

*I Peter 5:2-4*

*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [thereof], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

This is a crown for faithfully feeding the flock of God. It is available to those teachers who feed the sheep with the milk and meat of the Word of God. There may be other crowns available but these are the only ones mentioned in Scripture. At least these five are available to those who works remain, which were built of gold, silver and precious stones.

These rewards of crowns are for the purpose of determining degrees of authority in the Messianic Kingdom and not the Eternal Order. In eternity, all believers will be equal, but not so in the Kingdom where believers may have different positions of authority.

In the form of a parable Christ explained this truth. It found in the nineteenth chapter of Luke.

*Luke 19:11-27 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

**Next Week: I Corinthians chapter three continued**

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