

What is the purpose of the Judgement Seat of Christ?

Scripture: Romans 14:10–12; 1 Corinthians 3:10

Code: QA97

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The Bible talks about the Judgment Seat of Christ--also referred to as the *bema*--in three places: Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10--4:5; and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Only church-age saints will appear at that judgment, as shown in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

The purpose of the *bema* is an exhaustive evaluation of our lives. First Corinthians 4:5 says the Lord will come and "bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."

That passage reveals Paul's emphasis on the judgment seat of Christ. Notice that Paul says each man's *praise* will come to him from God. God gives rewards to the victors; He does not whip the losers. We know that He won't condemn us for our sins at that point, because Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Thus, the purpose of the judgment seat of Christ is to examine a Christian's total life. We will be recompensed for the deeds we have done, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). The term used there refers to a summing up and estimation of the total pattern of a believer's life. This overall focus should keep us from worrying over every stupid thing we've ever done, or thoughtless sin we have committed. It's a time of reward, not punishment.

At the same time, while we won't be condemned for our sins, our present lives do affect what will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here's how:

1. Sin and indifference in this life rob us of our present desire for serving the Lord. That in turn means a loss of rewards, because we will not have used our time to His glory. That is why Paul exhorts us to "be careful how [we] walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of [our] time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16, NASB).
2. Sin and indifference result in a loss of power in our lives because sin grieves the Holy Spirit.
3. Sin and indifference cause us to pass up opportunities for service, which we would otherwise perform and be rewarded for.

The greatest consequence of unfaithfulness here on earth is that it disappoints Christ. First John 2:28 says, "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." That is a sobering thought--we could be ashamed as we stand before the Lord. At the same time, it should encourage us with the prospect of receiving His lavish rewards if we serve Him faithfully during our time here on earth.

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