

The Judgment Seat of Christ¹

Just as there will be two future comings of Christ, there will be two future judgments. The next coming of Christ will be at the *rapture* after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and the last coming will be at the end of the *tribulation* at the battle of Armageddon. The next judgment will be at the judgment seat of Christ and the last judgment will be at the Great White Throne after the thousand year earthly reign of Christ in the *millennial kingdom*.

The judgment seat of Christ will most likely be associated with the rapture of the body of Christ, for in I Thessalonians 4:17 we read:

“Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

The word “**meet**” in the original has the meaning of a *planned* meeting and would therefore accommodate the judgment seat of Christ.

The two direct references to this judgment are found in the Scriptures below:

(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.”**

(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.”**

By the nature and timing of this judgment, only believers will be present. Let's look at other relevant Scriptures to get details of the proceedings.

(I Corinthians 3:6-15) **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 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.”**

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(1 Corinthians 4:1-5) **“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”**

The rewards (or loss thereof) will be the main consideration at this judgment. We will all give an account of ourselves and receive the things done in our body whether good or bad. It's worthy of note that even if our works are burned, we will be saved, so as by fire. I believe that what this is telling us is that at this judgment, we will dispense with all the things we have done since becoming saved. All our works will be tested by fire² and with six building materials utilized (i.e., gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay, stubble) we will all have some works that will burn and some that will abide (Gr, *meno*: remain). My feeling is that it will be a great relief to get rid of the wood, hay, and stubble once and for all. The works that remain will constitute a reward and the Bible also speaks about a crown that we will be given.

(2 Timothy 4:8) **“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.”**

The whole topic of the judgment seat of Christ is important to all believers and especially grace believers who sometimes are accused of using grace as a license to continue in sin. This is an unfair position because grace believers are very familiar with the Apostle Paul's teachings in Romans 7 and 8 on this issue. Rather, we are told that we are dead to sin and that the Holy Spirit will help us to overcome sin. What the teaching of the judgment seat of Christ can mean to us is that we have an incentive to live for the Lord and to flee from the deeds of the flesh in this life. Our eternal reward in heaven with all its glory can be built upon while we are still on this earth. Did you ever wonder why God didn't just take us to heaven the moment we were saved? He has left us here for a reason and will reward us for our faithful service.

Before we leave this topic let's address the question of grace versus works. I believe the proper relationship between the two is summarized in Ephesians:

(Ephesians 2:8-10) **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”**

Good works are a result of being saved; being saved is not a result of good works. If we are thankful for God's grace we will want to do those things that please Him and in turn He will reward us for our good works.

² Most likely fire in this case will be the Word of God, see Jeremiah 20:9 & Luke 24:32.