

6,30,20 / The Bema Seat

Our study is going to be a little challenging, but we're running out of time to be holding back on what matters most.

First after several months of trying to screen and eliminate the sensationalism of some of these guys - and those that are just cheesy, I've gotten better at detecting what is well documented and what isn't.

So along with continuing to verify everything in scripture, and reading books by people I know I can trust; things are becoming much clearer as to what's coming and why.

I recently went to the website of one of the primary groups the enemy is using to bring in the world government. Sometimes you need to go to the source to authenticate whether or not your secondary sources are being honest and careful about what they claim.

After watching their plans for our planet, I can see why the world will be absolutely thrilled to be a part of it. If I didn't know what I know from the Bible about the kingdom of Antichrist, I'd be *totally* on board. It's incredible!

I'll include a link to the video in these notes on the first page when I send them out; and another one that helps show the documentation.

World Economic Forum video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5pxhSnDr4U>

Spiro Skouras explanation/documentation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9YDkKhRXWg&t=8s>

But tonight, I want to prepare us for a couple of passages that are coming up soon in Colossians because they can be a little tricky to interpret; and could be misunderstood if we don't have a good understanding of what we're going to look at tonight.

I'm going to break this down into sections to try and make things flow better. Plus, as always, I'll send out the notes so you don't have to scramble to write down all the passages.

There are seven judgements cited in the Bible, but there are only two *all-encompassing* judgments:

The judgment of all those who are lost, which I called the "Great White Throne Judgment" in Rev. 20:11-15 and,

The judgment of all those who are in the body of Christ.

This judgement will be our focus tonight. So, I'll start by reading two passages that lay the foundation for this:

2 Cor. 5:10-11 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men."

1 Cor. 3:11-15 ". . . no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, 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. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

This is called the Bema Seat or "Judgment Seat." Paul draws it from the place in the Greek Olympics where rewards for the athletes were given.

It was not a place of condemnation, but only a place where prizes were given.

God's judgment of Christians is the same.

No one at this judgment will be condemned or have their sins exposed, but all of us will be judged according to the quality of our works; we will be judged on how we ran our race in the Christian life.

As to the timing, this will likely be the first thing that happens following the rapture because the bride has to be prepared for the marriage of the Lamb.

We see this in Rev. 19:6-8:

“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

This righteousness is not the forgiveness of sins or the imputed righteousness of Christ; those things happened when we were saved. This is the *fruit* of righteousness displayed through growing believers over the span of our lives here, and which becomes our ‘clothing’ in heaven.

As for our sins, all of them were taken to the cross and dealt with (Col. 2:13-14). He has forgiven them through the sacrifice of Christ; they won’t be brought up at the judgement seat.

Instead, we will give an account of our stewardship.

Luke 16:1 “And he said also unto his disciples, ‘There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, ‘How is it that I hear this of you? Give an account of your stewardship.’”

Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 4:2,

“Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

We’ll look more at what this means in a few minutes, but first I want to read Stromberg’s take on this:

“Wood, hay and stubble speak of humanity and the things of the flesh. To understand these, they need to be seen in the context of “durability”. For example, stubble is always spoken of as only being fit for burning (Isa. 47:14; Mal. 4:1). Wood, hay and stubble represent human accomplishment; things done, whether sincere or not, by human strength based on human understanding; usually for the acceptance of others; or to impress others. To men, some may seem very attractive and enduring; but to God all are the same, without value, only to be consumed by fire. Whereas gold and silver are not destroyed by fire, but are purified to bring out the best qualities in them for display. These works who find their source in God, not man, will endure the fires of examination and be found unto praise and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. . . Only those works which are of God, according to His specific will and by His power will survive God’s test by fire.”

Here is something I found that may be helpful in giving a more specific definition:

“It is a most sobering thought that the consuming fire of God shall burn out everything that does not contribute to God’s specific purpose for this age. For many believers, this may be their entire earthly life. Lot was pushed out of Sodom just before it, and all that he had accomplished while there, were destroyed. Lot himself was saved, yet so as by fire.”

And Sparks adds this comment;

“In the second and third chapters of the Book of the Revelation we have the Lord's survey of the seven churches. Those eyes that are as a flame of fire peer into the inner spiritual state and lay bare the condition - analyze, dissect, separate, place on the two sides of debit and credit, and form and pass their final verdict.”

One thing I should point out is that the rewards are not given based on the *amount* of works done, but on the *kind of materials* used. It’s quality, not quantity.

Building with wood, hay and stubble will produce a huge, temporary fire; but a small amount of building with gold, silver and precious stones will endure and be rewarded.

Again, it's not how much we do for Him; it's how much He is able to do through us because we are surrendered to His will over ours, and we are in sync with the Lord regarding what He is doing now, in our generation, not just in a general way with what He has done in other generations.

Another way to put that is this: Anything we do for Christ will be burned up; only that which is done *by God* will last.

In Heb. 4:10 we read this:

“For he who has entered (God’s) rest has himself also ceased from his own works.”

We don't cease from doing works; we just cease from doing *our own* works. Christian traditions and religious exercises have to give way in our lives to the life of Jesus being made manifest through our mortal flesh.

Nothing we instigate or initiate will count. The only works that will pass through the fire unscathed are those which have their origin in the Lord Himself.

In Eph. 2:10 Paul tells us,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Before creation, God laid out a plan for His Son and the part we would play in that plan. What we do must only be what furthers the eternal purpose of God.

So, it's not for us to decide what those works are, our role is simply to step into the works that God has already “prepared beforehand” for us to do.

Our experience at the Bema Seat will be determined by whether we discovered, in time, in our lives, exactly what the difference is between that which is done by us for Christ, and that which is done by the Holy Spirit through us.

The Lord needs absolutely no help to bring everything we need for life and godliness to us. He is doing this all around the world “outside the camp”. As the writer to Hebrews tells us in Heb. 13:13, “Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp. . .”.

If we want to be where the Lord is, we will have to go to Him.

The Lord is supplying the spiritual needs of all His children who are genuinely hungry for the knowledge of Christ; the knowledge of His purpose. But He is doing this quietly, outside the camp of what is called “Christianity”, in hidden fellowships around the world who have realized that what is being offered in our churches falls way short of what the Lord is after.

This is *His* work. He is preparing a people for His Name from among those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; who are aware of their own spiritual poverty (who are poor in spirit), and who have begun to realize the spiritual bankruptcy of contemporary Christianity.

I want to hit this from as many angles as I can because we really need it to be as clear as possible. And sometimes, hearing the way different authors describe this event can make lights flash. So, here’s another author’s take:

“God has left us in no doubt that He has a clearly defined purpose in view as the ultimate object of all His dealings. He has also made it abundantly clear what that purpose is. Further, it is distinctly shown that believers are "called according to His purpose." It just will not do to allow ourselves to be influenced by questions of comparative right or wrong, good or bad, permissibility, desirability, expediency, or policy. Nor must ambition, personal gratification, enlarged prospects "for the Lord," wider acceptance in Christianity, or any such thing, affect our decisions. One question, and one alone, will decide tragedy or glory: does this that is before me stand directly in line with the full purpose of God? When the end is reached, the full story told, the sum taken, how much that is bound up with this will be stripped off, as having no real substance with what is Christ, and therefore fail to be carried over into the eternal?” (TAS)

In my experience with those I have known and talked to over the years, I've come to the conclusion that the Church as a whole has no idea what God's real purpose and destiny for the church is.

The enemy has stolen this from us, and he wants to ensure that none of us are in pursuit of what God is in pursuit of.

Whenever I stop and think of these things, it hits home in a very personal way, here's why; listen to this passage from James;

"Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a *stricter* judgment." (Jas. 3:1)

I should probably put this on my refrigerator.

This section of Acts 20 should also be included:

"Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God - Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to warn each one with tears."

Pastors who neglect to bring the complete truth of God's purpose to their generation; who do not warn God's people of the dangers they face or prepare them for this time in history, will find themselves facing the Lord in shame and silence at the judgment seat;

and same is true of non-pastors who bury their talents (their spiritual gifts) and neglect the stewardship entrusted to them.

We see this in 1 Jn. 2:28; "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink back from Him in shame at his coming."

Or Jer. 6:14, speaking of God's warning to the shepherds of Israel;

"They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially."

In our age, this would be pastors who neglect to provide more than milk, more than superficial teaching, to the churches.

Every Sunday across our nation Christians are getting emotionally charged up but their deep, inner brokenness remains. Rather than rising above and growing in Christ, they are becoming increasingly vulnerable to deception.

As Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . .”

At the judgment seat of Christ, God will not overlook the theological laziness and selfishness of pastors who are more interested in personal acceptance and pleasing their people than in giving them what they need the most;

shepherds who rob their own congregations by avoiding to teach anything that might be controversial or offensive; withholding from them the information that could really help them.

And it goes much further than this, because pastors are to be watchmen over their people.

“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they *keep watch* over you as those who must give an account.” (Heb. 13:17)

I know pastors who literally refuse to even consider the implications of current world events in the light of Biblical prophecy; let alone warn and prepare their people.

Some don't believe we are near the return of Christ; others think it's possible, even likely, but they keep their thoughts to themselves and a few close friends.

Heb. 13 says that we will give an account of our ministry – and if we are out of step with the Lord or holding back the truth for whatever reason, then when we “give account”; we will have our eyes opened wide to our failure to do what the Lord desired of us.

Now, when we expand this and apply it to *all* of us; we need to consider these verses;

Rev. 3:1-3

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works complete before God.

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”

If we watch; we will know.

In Peter’s generation, the Lord’s purpose was the cross. In Mark 8:33 we see that Peter was against that idea and Jesus said to him, “Get behind me Satan, you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.”

And listen to the passage in Acts 13:36;

“When David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep. His body was buried with his fathers . . .”

In our generation, believers who do not live as if our time is extremely short; whose conversations are often around future plans in everything from college funds for their kids, to retirement, are showing they have no idea where we are in history even though many of them say they love Bible prophesy –

and they *hope* the Lord come back soon.

If, as believers, we are simply living the Christian life to the best of our ability, waiting for that great someday in the sky, then someone else is going to get our crown.

In 2 Tim. 4:8 Paul wrote this;

“. . . therefore, in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also *to all who have loved His appearing.*”

And in Rev. 3:11;

“I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

The Lord has a crown with your name on it, which represents a place with Him in His throne. Crowns are symbols of authority.

But if “His appearing” is only an interesting or mildly relevant doctrine rather than a vital, living, personal reality shaping everything you do and think, *knowing* the season we’re in, then someone who *is* awake is going to be given your place in the government of Christ.

These things might not be that important to you now; but they will be then.

It’s not possible for any Christian to lose their salvation; but it *is* possible to enter eternity without having fulfilled God’s purpose for us in our generation.

Like James says;

“What good is it, brethren, if someone claims to believe but has no corresponding works?”

The American church is so uninvolved in serving one another that the “80/20” cliché has become commonplace everywhere – 20% of the people doing 80% of the work needed for the church to survive.

The majority don’t seem to have any awareness of the evaluation we all face when the Lord returns.

It’s kind of like the parable the Lord gave in Matt. 25 – here’s a segment of that;

“I . . . went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours. But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant.’”

When we look at the lives presented to us in the book of Acts, we don’t see men and women who were idle, not much to do, waiting to be blessed by their church, etc.

We see people who were fully engaged in what the Lord was doing.

Their primary motive, of course, was love – like Paul told the Corinthians, “The love of Christ compels us. . . “because no matter what we do, “if we have not love, it profits nothing.”

But they also didn't want to end their lives, looking back at the 80% camp they had lived in and realize that they would be "least in the kingdom of heaven" and suffer loss at the judgement seat.

Most believers in our country are just existing and waiting for whatever is next, in this life or the one to come. Others are "Martha's" – super busy doing things for the Lord that He never wanted them to do.

It's their works, not His.

It's what Heb. 6 calls "dead works". They may look great to others and to the one doing them, but their source is religious flesh, not the Spirit of God.

If we relate all this to the specific issues of our time; James makes it clear that our words give us away. We can say we believe or that we are open to the idea of the Lord's soon return, but we live as though we only *hope* it's true.

Why don't we *know* whether it's true or not?

The Lord has written over 1/3 of the Bible with the specific purpose of making sure we have all the information we need to *know*, not *wonder*, where we are in history.

Let me give another example of something we say we believe but, for most, there is little to no evidence of that belief in their lives.

First, three passages to set the stage:

"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to bondage all their lives." (Heb. 2:14-15)

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear." (2 Tim. 1:7)

"What good is it, brethren, if someone claims to have faith but has no works? . . . Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (Jas. 2:14,17-18)

We say we believe the Bible – it's God's word; the Bible says that we've been delivered from the fear of death and that we haven't received a spirit of fear.

So, Paul was not afraid of death; and the early Christians were not afraid of death. But in our generation, millions of Christians are ‘sheltering in place’, afraid of a virus.

I’m not talking about people with pre-existing conditions who need to be careful. Absolutely, people who are especially vulnerable should take every precaution.

I’m talking about the majority of Christians who have not only bought into the lies our world is propagating; but have also adopted the world’s panic mentality.

The Moravian missionaries of the 16th century deliberately sold themselves into slavery so they could take the gospel to slaves, and they knew they would be beaten, starved and probably die. Here’s an overview of their sacrifice:

“The Moravians had learned that the secret of loving the souls of men was found in loving the Savior of men. On October 8, 1732, a Dutch ship left the Copenhagen harbor bound for the Danish West Indies. On board were the two first Moravian missionaries; John Leonard Dober, a potter, and David Nitschman, a carpenter. They sold themselves into slavery to reach the slaves of the West Indies.

As the ship slipped away, they lifted up a cry that would one day become the rallying call for all Moravian missionaries, “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.”

The Moravian’s passion for souls was surpassed only by their passion for the Lamb of God.”

Other Moravians went to live in leper colonies to reach those no one was willing to even touch because of how incredibly contagious leprosy was. And most of these missionaries died of leprosy – they knew that going in. It wasn’t like the 98% survival rate of the Coronavirus.

And we, as God’s eternal sons of heaven, hesitate to even shake hands with anyone – contagious or not.

It's like the story of an old missionary who told his son, "It is necessary that we go; it is *not* necessary that we survive."

In the passage I read earlier in 2 Cor., most translations have this:

“. . . each one will be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

But Paul did not use the word for "bad" that speaks of something which is morally evil. The word he used means "unacceptable" or "without value".

To help us understand exactly what the Bema Seat will be evaluating, we need to see our service to the Lord in the light of His intended functionality of the church as a whole. Here's what I mean:

Eph. 4:11-16:

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

It's not that we need to be able to "identify" our gift – our stewardship. We don't need to put a label on it.

We just need to take a serious look at the needs in the body of Christ, see what that develops in us in terms of a burden for the needs that stand out, and then move into addressing them.

God has recreated us in such a way that what we become most burdened about, most prayerful about, is the thing He wants us involved in.

That's how we determine how we fit into “. . . what every joint supplies, according to the working of each individual part, causing the growth of the body. . . “

This is what will be evaluated at the Bema Seat – our personal ministry in the part we are meant to play in the building up of the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is working to bring the church to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. This is what God intends to do through each individual member's giftedness and faithfulness in serving one another in love.

Whether or not we involve ourselves in that purpose, supplying our part, in the power and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will be what is examined at the judgement seat of Christ.

So, we're going to wrap up, but please keep these truths in mind as you think about what we've looked at:

In 2 Jn. 8 John writes this:

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

“Full reward” comes to those who at the end, like Jacob, are leaning on their staff worshipping God.

The staff represents brokenness through suffering; worshipping is the outcome of endurance and of a spiritual understanding of God's ways.

So, embrace the circumstances the Lord has brought you into, stay consistent and firm in the truth, minister to the Lord's people and you will receive full reward at Christ's return.

This last part I want to mention is not meant to downplay the importance of the Bema Seat or our responsibility before the Lord while we are here, but I also want to make sure we realize that there is a future that awaits *all* believers that is filled with joy regardless of the gain or loss of rewards.

We aren't facing the wrath of God as unbelievers will, we will be in the presence of our Savior, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

We will all, without exception, be perfectly conformed to the image of God's son. There will be no regret or guilt beyond the outcome of the judgment seat.

Heaven would cease to be heaven if there was anything there that caused pain to any of God's creation.

We won't be jealous of those whose rewards are greater; we won't look down on those whose reward are less. There can be neither pride nor guilt in the eternal state.

So, as you set your eyes on the future, start from a place of stillness before God; presenting your body as a living sacrifice.

I'll close with a few verses taken from Revelation 21 and 22 that reveal our ultimate future in the kingdom of God.

"Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him."
(Rev. 22:1-3)

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make *all* things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said to me, 'It is done!'" (Rev. 21:3-6)