

“THE CHURCH BEFORE CHRIST”

(Third in an 8 week series on “The Future Unfolded”)

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

➤ Judgment or Honor?

The Greek word *bema* (translated “judgment seat” in the NIV) was a familiar term to the people of Paul’s day. Dr. Lehman Strauss writes:

“In the large Olympic arenas, there was an elevated seat on which the judge of the contest sat. After the contests were over, the successful competitors would assemble before the *bema* to receive their rewards or crowns. The *bema* was not a judicial bench where someone was condemned; it was a reward seat. Likewise, the Judgment Seat of Christ is not a judicial bench...the Christian life is a race, and the divine umpire is watching every contestant. After the church has run her course, He will gather every member before the *bema* for the purpose of examining each one and giving the proper reward to each.”
(*God’s Plan for the Future*, p. 111)

*“For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”* – 2 Corinthians 5:10

*“You, then, why do you judge your **brother**? Or why do you look down on your **brother**? **For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.** ¹¹ It is written: “As surely as I live,” says the Lord, “every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.” ¹² So then, **each of us will give an account of himself to God.**”*
Romans 14:10-12

1) Construction for Eternity –

*“By the grace God has given me, **I laid a foundation** as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, **which is Jesus Christ.** ¹² If any man **builds on this foundation** using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and **the fire will test the quality of each man’s work.** ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his **reward.** ¹⁵ If it is burned up, he will suffer **loss**; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*
- 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

➤ Materials for Construction

✓ Sharing Christ with Others

*“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is **at work**”*

*in you who believe...¹⁹ For **what is our hope, our joy, or the crown** in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? **Is it not you?**²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 19-20

✓ Doing Good to Others

*“Let us not become weary in **doing good**, for at the proper time **we will reap a harvest** if we do not give up.¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us **do good** to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*

- Galatians 6:9-10

✓ Using Our Gifts Wisely

*“**The end of all things is near**. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹⁰ **Each one should use whatever gift** he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*

- 1 Peter 4:7-10

✓ Using Our Time Wisely

*“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ **making the most of every opportunity**, because the days are evil.¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*

- Ephesians 5:15-17

✓ Using Our Money Wisely

*“**Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ But **store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

- Matthew 6:19-21

✓ Using Our Authority Wisely

*“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men **who must give an account**. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”*

- Hebrews 13:17

2) Competition for Eternity –

✓ Strictly Train

*“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize**.²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.²⁶ Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.²⁷ No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

✓ Be Tenacious

*“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I **press on** toward the goal **to win the prize** for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*
- Philippians 3:13-14

✓ Resist Temptation

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off **everything that hinders** and **the sin** that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*
- Hebrews 12:1

✓ Be Trustworthy

*“Now it is required that those who have been **given a trust** must prove faithful. ³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. **It is the Lord who judges me.**”*
- 1 Corinthians 4:2-4

✓ The Trophies

The Crown that Lasts — given to those who master the sin nature

*“Run in such a way as to get the prize ... we do it to get **a crown that will last forever.**”*
- 1 Corinthians 9:24b, 27b

The Crown of Rejoicing — given to those who share Christ with others

*For **what is our hope, our joy, or the crown** in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? **Is it not you?** ²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

The Crown of Life—given to those who faithfully suffer for their faith

*“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and **you will suffer persecution** for ten days. **Be faithful**, even to the point of death, and I will give **you the crown of life.**”*
- Revelation 2:10

The Crown of Righteousness—given to those who look for His coming

*“ Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.**”*
- 2 Timothy 4:8

The Crown of Glory—given to faithful preachers & teachers

*“**Be shepherds of God’s flock** that is under your care, serving as overseers — ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, **you will receive the crown of glory** that will never fade away.”*
- 1 Peter 5:2, 4

THE WEDDING OF CHRIST

1) The Engagement

*"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. **I promised you to one husband**, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."*
- 2 Corinthians 11:2

2) The Purifying

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and **to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.**"*

- Ephesians 5:25-27

3) The Wedding

*"Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! **For the wedding of the Lamb has come**, and his bride has made herself ready.⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (**Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.**)"*

- Revelation 19:6-9

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

- Psalm 90:12