

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

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The Judgment Seat of Christ is when all Christians give a private account to the Lord as to their service and loyalty to the Lord Jesus. In Romans 14 verses 10-12, it is said to be individual when each of us will be examined. In 1 Corinthians 3, 10-15 the examination will be the testing of our works. In 1 Corinthians 4, 1-5 secret things will be revealed and 2 Corinthians 5, 9-10 states that our character will be revealed.

Romans 14 seems to deal with various characteristics of brethren. The strong brother must not consider himself superior to the weaker brother. As Graham Scroggie said, There are not better (or superior) Christians but there are more obedient ones. We must not set a weaker or new Christian at naught for that involves pride. God receives both types of brethren. Each is entitled to their own opinions but they must be conformed to God's Will.

Each one of us will give an account to God. We will have no one to blame and the occasion will be a solemn one. We will have to explain our attitudes to things in our lives while on earth. This takes place in Heaven after the rapture of the church and before the Marriage Supper of the Lamb when the church, the Bride of Christ, is made ready.

The passage in 1 Corinthians deals with our attitude towards teachers, pastors, leaders and doctrines and we are told to keep the Judgment Seat in view in all we say and do. We read that in these last days false teachers will appear and lead many astray. (1 Timothy 4.3) We are to adhere to the faith once and for ever delivered to us (Jude 3). This clearly indicates traditional and well-established ways that we must follow and that way is narrow and does not take into account modern, new and trendy ideas (Matthew 7.14). We are to walk the way of holiness (Isaiah 35.8) and our ways are not God's ways (Isaiah 55.8).

The true believer delights in God's ways and NOT their own ways (Isaiah 58.2). We are not to put too high an estimate on other Christians and their ways yet many praise their pastors, teachers and denominations far more than the Lord Jesus.

The Judgment Seat will be a testing time and a test by fire since fire is a symbol of judgment. Individual rewards will be given for our works. The judgment does not deal with our sin for that has been dealt with at the Cross and our eternal security is safe.

Paul gives us a picture of a town surveyor who wants houses built. He specifies the foundation but leaves the rest of the building to builders. Some build beautiful temple-like buildings with silver and gold. Others build shacks with wood, hay and stubble as their material. Verse 9 says, Ye are God's building and therefore God is the surveyor.

Paul laid the foundation at Corinth and Apollos and others raised the superstructure with correct doctrine and there was subsequent fruit seen in the lives of believers. Others built with wood, hay and stubble to attract the crowds and entertain; they tickled the ears; they taught carnality as opposed to spirituality which may be characterised by jealousy and strife.

In 1 Corinthians 4, we are reminded that those who labour for the Lord are called ministers of Christ. The word minister is an under-rower, a sailor serving under another's command. Christians have the privilege of serving under Christ. Paul calls them stewards which translates as house managers, administering something that is not their own. No servant is greater than the Lord, although some give that appearance and like to do so.

The judgment indicates four things

The proper time when the acts of our life are calculated and seen in their completeness

The bringing to light of those secret things whether good or bad.

The revealing of the motives which resulted in our actions and speech.

The Lord knows our heart and motives.

What we do to receive the limelight for ourselves is done for self, and not for the Lord. There is far too much emphasis on self (look what I have done) particularly in modern churches and trendy fellowships, and this is an increasing problem.

In the passage in 2 Corinthians, Paul refers to the affliction which comes with the true work of the Gospel although he calls it a light affliction. He speaks for himself, and also for all true believers, when he says that he wants to please the Lord and that cannot be done if one is pleasing oneself. Well-pleasing to the Lord has the thought of ambition. At the Judgment Seat any falsity will be revealed and our true character and motives will be made clear.

The Judgment Seat deals with our accountability to the Lord and this must lead us to live the life that pleases God and not to please or promote self or to extol our gifts and virtues. When it comes to doctrine, Paul had been accused of using the Word of God deceitfully it has been suggested. We can say that many handle the Scriptures untruthfully today, and, in some meetings, the promotion of the Lord Jesus and the Word is not given pre-eminence. Self is.

It must be remembered that the church at Corinth was carnal rather than spiritual as made clear in the first epistle. This is why some denominations err because they follow the example of the Corinthians and are carnal rather than spiritual. The emphasis on the worldly and self is with us today as it was with the Corinthians at first and although we in the world we are not to be of the world and its methods. By the time of the second epistle, the Corinthians had moved towards a better position.

The meaning of carnal is that which is in opposition to spirituality. Being carnal means 'of the flesh' and to be carnally minded can lead to death as stated in Romans 8. 6. If you are carnal your mind is governed by the flesh and, as many Biblical scholars and lexicographers have pointed out, to be of the flesh and of the world is the debasing of spirituality. To be carnally minded is enmity against God (Romans 8.7)

The 'flesh' is the stubbornness against God and His authority and the desire not to put into practice all the teachings of Christ and the New Testament and is, therefore, rebellion against God. The flesh wants its own way and control often with wrong interpretations of the Bible and 'new' doctrines.

It is not for me at this time to deal in depth with those churches which do employ worldly methods. Is pop music and dance worldly? That is a rhetoric question, of course. Is the promotion of self and one's abilities and gifts in accordance with the New Testament? That is another rhetoric question. As the answers are obvious, one has to ask why are these things being done in churches? The usual reply is that 'we have to get people in' and so entertainment evangelism and topical ideas are best! We live in days of new ideas and trendy conventions and are bringing the world into the Word rather than bring the Word into the world.

One of the main and serious problems is that of denominations and the variety of doctrines within them. I recently had to deal with an Archbishop who, on a particular Biblical issue, said that he did not follow the New Testament teaching as the Church of England had completely different regulations.

The Elim Pentecostals admit that, as they have had the second blessing and speak in tongues, they are the superior Christians and have all the right answers and they are never wrong; Catholics believe that the bread and wine at the Eucharist actually becomes the physical body and blood of Christ Himself and so on. These are problems which endure and should never have arisen.

A very serious problem is the emphasis on the Holy Spirit rather than the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is not to be the centre (John 15.26). He does not speak or promote Himself (John 16.13) but desires the Lord Jesus to be the central point and be glorified.

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