

Paul's Second Letter to the Church at Corinth

Lesson 7

The Bema Seat Judgment

Paul had suffered rejection, opposition, and violent persecution, but he never “lost heart” because he knew God was simultaneously blessing him in many ways. Paul also had a confident belief and hope in God’s promise of a bodily resurrection and eternal bliss in glory with Jesus. A sobering part of the resurrection is the certain judgement that awaits us all.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10

1. Are believers in Jesus Christ completely forgiven of their sins (Romans 8:1, 1 John 2:12, Hebrews 10:17-18, Eph 4:32)? Therefore, the judgment of those who have Jesus as their savior must not involve judging sins. What is Paul’s ambition in 2 Cor 5:9?
2. Who is this letter written to (2 Cor 1:1)? Therefore who is the “we” in 2 Cor 5:10? Does this include everybody in the universal church (2 Cor 5:10, Rom 14:8-10)? Will the judgment be an option or a requirement?
3. Does the judgment seat of Christ appear to be a completely different judgment as to people, time, and place, than the great white throne judgment of Rev 20:11-15? How are unbelievers described and what is their fate (Rev 21:8)?
4. A parallel passage to 2 Cor 5:10 is 1 Cor 3:10-15. At what point in their life does the judgment of Christians begin, or in other words when was our “foundation” laid (1 Cor 3:10-11)? Who is our “foundation” (1 Cor 3:11)?
5. Paul was using figurative language to describe the quality of life in serving Christ in 1 Cor 3. Paul likened it to building materials. What are the two distinct types of materials that signify the work of Christians (1 Cor 3:12)? What happens to wood, hay, and stubble in a fire?

6. What is "the day" that will show the evidence of the quality of each person's work (1 Cor 3:13)? What image does Paul use for testing the "building materials", or what is the judgment likened to (1 Cor 3:15)?

7. If a person's service or good works done for Christ survive the fiery test of Christ's judgment, what will he receive (1 Cor 3:14)? If a Christian's works are burned up, ie fail the test, will he still be saved (1 Cor 3:15)?

8. The issues at stake at the judgment seat of Christ seem to be stewardship, faithfulness, purity of motives, service, and use of spiritual gifts. What is the only way to please God (Hebrews 11:1-2, 6)? Can we "bear fruit" apart from Christ (John 15:5)? Therefore, is our faithful relationship with Christ all important when the quality of our works are tested?

9. In 2 Cor 5:10, the Greek word used for "judgment seat" is Bema. This was a raised platform on which victorious athletes received their crowns and medals. The phrase "each one" stresses the personal nature of the individual believer's judgment. The use of the word "bad" does not mean moral evil, but rather worthless or useless works. Based on 1 Cor 3:11-15 how would you classify bad deeds? What is the penalty for bad deeds in 1 Cor 3:11-15?

10. After Christ becomes our savior and the Lord of our life, what is our life supposed to be like (Galations 2:20; 5:16, 22-23, Eph 2:10, Col 3:17, Romans 14:7-8)? At the Bema seat judgment of Christ, will each discover the real verdict on his ministry, service, and motives? Will all hypocrisy and pretense be stripped away and vanish like hay and stubble in a fire? Remember, apart from Christ you would be at a different judgment described in Rev 20:11-15. Therefore, will there be any pride, envy, anger, or only humbly rejoicing in absolute truth?