

2-12-2026 approximately 35 minutes

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV)

Opening Prayer:

Father God, we come before You in the name of Jesus. We thank You for Your Word that is living and active. Lord, as we open the Scriptures today, we ask that You would give us understanding. Help us to rightly divide Your truth. Let this message both comfort and challenge us. If there is anyone listening who does not yet know You, draw them by Your Spirit. And for those who are born again, stir our hearts to live for what truly matters. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Introduction: A Future Appointment:

Today we are looking at what Scripture calls the **Judgment Seat of Christ**.

In **2 Corinthians 5:10** (NIV) Paul writes:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

That verse is not written to unbelievers. It is written to believers.

Paul says ***“...we must all appear...”***
He includes himself.

This is **not** the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20.
This is something totally different.

The word Paul uses for “judgment seat” is *bēma* ... a raised platform. In the ancient Greek world, it was the place where awards

were given at athletic competitions. It was also where a magistrate would evaluate cases.

The key idea is evaluation not condemnation.

For the believer in Christ, the Judgment Seat is not about salvation. That was settled at the cross.

It is about **rewards**. This involves your eternal inheritance.

1. Salvation Is Settled at the Cross:

Let's be very clear first.

Being born again and receiving rewards are two different things.

Salvation is a gift.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) says:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

You are not saved by what you do.
You are saved by **what Jesus did.**

When Jesus was on the cross and with his last breath He cried out, **“...It is finished...”** (John 19:30)NIV, the debt of sin was paid in full.

If you are born again if you have repented and trusted in Christ your eternal future is secure.

Romans 8:1 (NIV) says:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

No condemnation. - No judgment, no disapproval, no conviction... You are saved by a gift from Jesus to you....

Now...The Great White Throne judgment in **Revelation 20:11-15** is for those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. That judgment determines eternal separation.

But the Judgment Seat of Christ is for **believers**. It determines rewards.

- One determines destination.
- The other determines reward.

2. What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3:3 (NIV):**

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

Being born again means you have been spiritually made alive.

You were dead in sin.

God made you alive through faith in Christ.

- It is not church attendance.
- It is not water baptism.
- It is not good works.

It is repentance and **faith** in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

When that happens:

- . Your sins are forgiven.
- . You are justified declared righteous.
- . You are adopted into God's family.
- . You are **sealed** by the Holy Spirit.

 That is salvation.

But after salvation comes responsibility.

3. The Bema Seat: Evaluation of a Believer's Life

Paul gives more detail in **1 Corinthians 3:11–15 (NIV)** ¹¹ **For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their 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 person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.**

It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.”

Notice something....

The foundation is Jesus Christ.
That is salvation.

But what you build on that foundation is
your life after salvation.

Paul says some works are like:

- . Gold
- . Silver
- . Costly stones

Others are like:

- . Wood
- . Hay
- . Straw

The fire tests the quality.

Look at Verse 15 says: **1 Corinthians 3:15 NIV** **"If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames."**

Did you catch that?

Saved but with loss of reward.

This is not loss of salvation.

It is loss of reward.

You can enter heaven with reward
or you can enter heaven empty-handed.

This is "Free Will" ...

4. What Is Being Evaluated?

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, God evaluates:

1. Our Works

What did we do with the life He gave us?

2. Our Motives 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NIV)

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the

motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

It says:

“He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.”

God is not just looking at what we did
He’s looking at why we did it....

- Did we serve... to be seen?
- Did we give... to receive praise?
- Did we preach... to build our own name?

Or did we do it for **His glory**?

Jesus warned in **Matthew 6:5** NIV **5** **“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.**

👉 that some people **“...have received their reward in full...”** because they did things to be seen by others.

Earthly applause can cancel heavenly reward.

5. Crowns and Rewards:

The New Testament speaks of rewards as crowns:

- The Crown of Righteousness **(2 Timothy 4:8 NIV⁸ 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.)**
- The Crown of Life **(James 1:12 NIV¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the**

test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.)

- The Crown of Glory **(1 Peter 5:4 NIV⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.)**
- The Imperishable Crown **(1 Corinthians 9:25 NIV²⁵ 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.)**

These are not symbols of salvation.

They are rewards for:

- Faithfulness
- Endurance
- Loving His appearing
- Shepherding faithfully

In Revelation chapter 4, the elders cast their crowns before the throne. **Why?** Because even our rewards are for His glory.

We don't earn heaven.
But we can earn reward in heaven.

6. Living with Eternity in View:

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:9 (NIV)**

“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”

That's the context of verse 10.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV)¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Knowing we will stand before Christ should change how we live.

It should affect:

- How we speak.
- How we forgive.
- How we serve.
- How we use our money.
- How we shepherd our families.

We are not working for salvation.

We are working **from** salvation.

There is a difference.

- Legalism says:
“Work so God will love you.”
- Grace says:
“God loves you ... now live for Him.”

7. Modern Example:

Imagine two employees hired by a generous boss.

The boss gives them full benefits, security, and position.

One employee says,
“I’m secure I’ll just coast.”

The other says,
“He’s been so good to me. I want to serve faithfully.”

Both are employees.
But their evaluation will differ.

Salvation secures your position.
Faithfulness determines your reward.

8. Why This Matters:

Some Christians avoid this topic because they fear judgment.

But this judgment is not about wrath.

It is about accountability and reward.

Jesus said in ***Matthew 6:20 (NIV) ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.***

You can store up treasure there.

Or you can waste your life here.

Time is short.

Eternity is long.

9. A Sobering Reality:

It is possible to:

- . Be saved
- . Go to heaven
- . But have little reward

Imagine standing before Jesus and realizing:

You lived mostly for **yourself**.

The One who bled for you evaluates your life.

Not to condemn
but to measure faithfulness.

That should sober us.

10. Salvation Invitation:

Now, let me speak clearly.

If you are not born again, the Judgment Seat of Christ is not your next appointment.

The Great White Throne would be.

And that is a judgment of condemnation.

But today, there is grace.

Jesus died for your sins.
He rose from the dead.
He offers forgiveness.

Romans 10:9 (NIV) says:

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Salvation is not earned.
It is received.

If you have never trusted Him, today is the day.

Turn from your sin.
Trust in Christ.
Call upon His name.

He will save you.

11. For All Believers:

For those who are born again:

Live in light of eternity.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not meant to terrify you.

It is meant to focus you.

One day you will see Him face to face.

Let that day be a day of joy.

Live so that you hear:

“....Well done, good and faithful servant....” (Matthew 25:23 NIV)

Not because you earned heaven
but because you lived faithfully for the One
who saved you.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we thank You that our salvation is secure in You. Thank You that we are justified by grace through faith. But Lord, help us not to waste our lives. Help us to build with gold, silver, and precious stones. Purify our motives. Teach us to live for eternal reward and not temporary applause.

And Father God, if there is anyone listening who has not yet been born again, draw them now. Give them the courage to repent and believe.

We look forward to the day we see You face to face. May we live ready for that moment.

In Jesus' name, Amen.