

Entrust Systematic Theology: Eschatology Part 3 The Believer's Judgment 10/31/19

## THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST<sup>1</sup>

### I. Introduction

#### Key passages:

Romans 14:10–12 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup> For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." <sup>12</sup> So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

1 Corinthians 4:1–5 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup> But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

2 Corinthians 5:9–10 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of

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<sup>1</sup> Notes adapted from Eschatology courses from the Expositor's Seminary (Dr. Matt Waymeyer).

Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

**II. The Timing of the Judgment**

- Because the Lord will come and bring His people back to the Father’s House (John 14:1-3), the divine evaluation of believers at “the Judgment Seat of Christ” must take place in heaven, just after the Rapture. In fact, the eschatological judgment of believers is repeatedly connected with the coming of the Lord for His people:
  - “until the Lord comes” (1 Cor 4:5)
  - “at the coming of our Lord Jesus” (1 Thess 3:13)
  - “the coming of the Lord” (James 5:7-8)
  - “when He appears” (1 John 2:28a)
  - “at His coming” (1 John 2:28c)
  
- In synthesizing all that Scripture teaches about the judgment of mankind, then, one can identify at least three distinct judgments that will take place in the future:

<b>Those Judged</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Divine Judgment</b>	<b>Key Passage</b>
Believers	After the Rapture	Judgment Seat of Christ	1 Cor 3:10-15
Living Nations	After the 2nd Coming	Sheep/Goat Judgment	Matt 25:31-46
Unbelievers	After the Millennium	Great White Throne	Rev 20:11-15

- There is less clarity – and therefore some disagreement – regarding the timing of the judgment of (1) OT saints, (2) tribulation converts, and (3) millennial converts.

**III. The Nature of the Judgment**

- When believers stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they will give an account of themselves to God, and the Lord will examine them thoroughly.

#### **A. Human Accounting (Rom 14:8-10)**

- “we will all stand before the judgment seat” (8)
- “each one of us will give an account of himself to God” (10)

#### **B. Divine Examination (1 Cor 3:10-4:5)**

- “each man’s work *will become evident*” (3:13a)
- “the day *will show it*” (3:13b)
- “it is *to be revealed*” (3:13c)
- “the fire itself *will test* the quality of each man’s work” (3:13d)
- “the one who *examines* me is the Lord” (4:4)
- “the Lord...will...*bring to light* the things hidden in the darkness” (4:5b)
- “the Lord...will... *disclose* the motives of men’s hearts” (4:5c)

### **IV. The Criteria of the Judgment**

- At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord will adjudicate both the obedience of the believer’s life and the faithfulness of his ministry:

#### **A. Obedience in One’s Life (Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10)**

1. An Account of Himself (Rom 14:12)
2. His Deeds in the Body (2 Cor 5:10; cf. v. 9)
3. According to the “good” he has done
4. According to the “bad” he has done

- **Key question:**

How is this different than unbelievers being judged “according to their deeds” in Revelation 20:12-13?

## **B. Faithfulness in One’s Ministry (1 Cor 3:10-4:5)**

- The clearest NT passage about the Judgment Seat of Christ focuses most on the work of the ministry.
- More specifically, the divine evaluation of the labor of a man’s ministry will focus on:
  - the quality of the labor
  - the trustworthiness of the laborer
  - the motives of the laborer.

### **1. The Quality of the Labor (1 Cor 3:8, 12-13)**

1 Corinthians 3:8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor...<sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> 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.

- The Fire in Paul’s Metaphor
- The Difference in Building Materials
- The Quality of Each Man’s Work

### **2. The Trustworthiness of the Laborer (1 Cor 4:1-2)**

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

- The Object of the Stewardship (v. 1)
- The Requirement of the Stewards (v. 2)

- Cf. Matt 25:14-30: “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful...” (vv. 21, 23; cf. Lk 19:12-27).

### **3. The Motives of the Laborer (1 Cor 4:3-5)**

1 Corinthians 4:3–5 But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men’s* hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.

- “the things hidden in the darkness” (v. 5b)
- “the motives of men’s hearts” (v. 5c)

## **V. The Outcome of the Judgment**

- The salvation of God’s people is safe and secure – there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). All of them will experience eternal life (John 5:24).
- Even so, there are both positive and negative outcomes resulting from the Judgment Seat of Christ.

### **A. Positive Outcomes**

- “each will receive his own reward” (1 Cor 3:8)
  - “he will receive a reward” (1 Cor 3:14)
  - “each man’s praise will come to him from God” (1 Cor 4:5)
  - “each one” will be “recompensed” for “good” “deeds (2 Cor 5:10)
- In addition, many point to the eschatological crowns given to believers at the time of Christ’s return as eternal rewards issued at the Judgment Seat.

**Eschatological Crowns**

Passage	Crown	Recipients
1 Cor 9:25	“imperishable” crown	Paul as a minister who persevered
1 Thess 2:19	“crown of exultation”	Paul as the spiritual father and shepherd of the Thessalonians
James 1:12	“crown of life”	“a man who perseveres under trial” and “those who love Him”
1 Peter 5:4	“unfading crown of glory”	elders who have served as faithful undershepherds
2 Tim 4:8	“crown of righteousness”	Paul as a faithful minister and “all who have loved His appearing”
Rev 2:10	“crown of life”	believers “faithful until death”

- **QUESTION:** Which of these crowns are given to all believers and which appear to be rewards for faithfulness?

**B. Negative Outcomes**

- “he will suffer loss” (1 Cor 3:15)
- “each one” will be “recompensed” for “bad” “deeds” (2 Cor 5:10)

- “shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (1 John 2:28)

**QUESTION:** *What implications should the Judgment Seat of Christ have for the ministry of church leaders in the local church?*

- **James 3:1** Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.
- **Hebrews 13:17** They keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.