

Parson to Person

ROMANS 14 PART 9

(The Judgment Seat of Christ Part 5)

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:9–15 NKJV).

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:9–13 NKJV).

We have examined the “*bema*” accounts in the Scriptures and have come to see that no first century believer, upon hearing of a “*bema*,” would equate the thought with rewards without the equal or outweighing connection to a place of evaluation and potential judgment.

It has been seen that the mental and or physical connection to “*bema*” for a first century person living in Jerusalem, Corinth, or Caesarea might include the penalty of death, incarceration, beatings, etc. However, one living in Athens might indeed reflect upon the Olympic Games and rewards for the victor.

With this in mind, I find it odd that many Theologians have suggested that the “*bema*” should be seen as a place of rewards, for the believer only, only from the Church Age, and where the works of these believers alone will be tested by fire. Apparently then, some of the same Theologians believe that those works that pass the test will be rewarded—but the works of other believers from other dispensations apparently don’t experience the same. As mentioned earlier, this is not a concept found in the Bible. Therefore, it should not to be viewed as Biblical—if for no other reason than the fact that extra-biblical information has been gathered and inserted in order to make the suggestion. This is lousy hermeneutics.

The Bible does suggest that the believer’s works will be tried by fire and that believer will be rewarded. However, it does not allow for an embarrassing evaluatory examination of the bad, faulty, or less than good. Therefore, a careful examination of 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Peter 3 (both above) will prove essential to help us see that although a believer’s works will be tried by fire, the passages do not show a reference to the “*bema*” nor that of a specific placement just after the Rapture.

I suggest that a trial by fire of *all* things will occur after the Millennial Reign of Jesus, following The Great White Throne Judgment. This seems to take place just prior to the introduction of a New Heaven and New Earth. It appears to me that the cleansing by fire removes all things temporal and allows for only those things eternal—thus the work of God, His work in and through the believer, and the works of the angelic hosts, but excluding the fleshly works of man, the workings of Satan, and the fallen rebellious angels.

Let’s consider what John wrote about The Great White Throne Judgment. *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not*

found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...” (Revelation 20:11–21:1a NKJV).

Here we see the Great White Throne and an event of climactic judgment. The “*dead*” here does not refer to the believer—any believer—from any dispensation. It refers only to those who have not trusted the Lord for salvation and are thus unredeemed. They are said to experience the “*second death*” and will be “*cast into the lake of fire.*” Here then it becomes clear that all those who do not have their names written in “*the Book of Life*” will be cast into the lake of fire, allowing only for the righteous (and those things righteous) to remain.

Therefore, it seems best to me to suggest that the works of the believer deemed good, meriting the eternal, will remain going forward, while the things of lesser quality will be burned. The believer will be rewarded for those things equated as “gold, silver, and precious stones” while the “wood, hay, and straw” will be a loss. I might also suggest that the “gold, silver, and precious stones” would best be described as the work of God in and through the believer, rather than the work of the believer in God. A believer’s best efforts merit nothing. It is the work of God that is meritorious and eternal.

Although the scene wherein John describes a Great White Throne is a Judgment for the unbeliever, it is possible to suggest that believers will be present, yet uncondemned—not under judgment, but simply there at the throne of God to glorify Him. (See all of Revelation 3:21 through all of chapter 5, Revelation 7:9–17, and Revelation 21:1–8.)

The believer who has come before the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—in saving faith—will never suffer judgment but “has passed from death unto life” (John 5:24 NKJV).

Now, lest we forget, as God told Abraham, “*I am your shield and exceedingly great reward*” (Genesis 15:1 NKJV), one may correctly say that the application belongs to us as well. “*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham*” (Galatians 3:7–9 NKJV).

I Love you all,
Pastor Paul