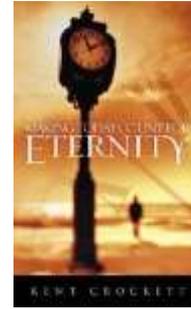


The Judgment Seat of Christ

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[The following is a shortened chapter from *Making Today Count for Eternity* by Kent Crockett, Multnomah Publishers. This book explains that what you will be doing in heaven is being determined during your time on earth, which is your "Opportunity." This book is available to purchase in paperback and ebook. [Click on the book cover](#) to go to Amazon.com]



For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Judgment day is not an unannounced test. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be repaid for things we have done. The judgment seat, or *bema* in Greek, is the place where Jesus will evaluate our lives and will give us our eternal assignments. The more faithful you lived while on earth, the better assignment you will receive.

After an athlete won an event at the Isthmian games in Corinth, he would proceed to the bema seat to receive his reward. Paul uses this earthly event to demonstrate a heavenly truth. After we have finished running the race of life, we must appear at the bema seat in heaven to determine what rewards we may have won. This is why he encourages us to "run in such a way that you may win" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

If God forgives our sins, why do we have to face the judgment?

Weren't our sins were judged on the Cross? Yes. The judgment seat of Christ does not examine sins. It will examine your works from the moment you were saved until the day you die. This judgment will decide your responsibilities in heaven. Dr. C. S. Lovett has said, "Salvation gets us to heaven, but works [after salvation] determine what we do after we get there." God's grace and generosity will each be demonstrated on the day of rewards: His grace will be shown because He saves us; His generosity will be shown when He rewards us.

What will be judged?

1) We will be judged according to our motives.

"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" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

If the devil can't get us to do wrong, he will tempt us to do right with wrong motives. The Pharisees diligently performed the right duties by giving money, praying, and fasting. Although those deeds were good, their motives were evil. They craved admiration from men, but not from God. Jesus said their selfish motives canceled out their rewards (Matthew 6:2,5).

2) We will be judged according to our works.

"For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints" (Hebrews 6:10). On the day of judgment, God will separate our good and bad works to determine our reward.

Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 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. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. (1 Corinthians 3:12–14)

The foundation is the most important stage of construction. When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord, He becomes our sure foundation on which we build our lives. Once the foundation is laid, we spend the rest of our lives building on it. Peter tells us to "live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2). The "rest of the time" means our remaining years of life on earth.

The materials are our post-conversion deeds and are divided into two categories. The gold, silver, and precious stones are deeds motivated by our love for God. These will be rewarded throughout our eternal existence. The wood, hay, and straw are our selfish deeds and attitudes that won't be rewarded and could even cause a loss of reward.

Wood, hay, straw	Gold, silver, precious stones
Disobedience and selfish motives	Doing things for God's glory
Wasting money on useless items	Cheerfully giving money to God
Causing division and strife	Teaching Bible study
Gossiping about others	Praying for others
Manipulating others	Serving others
Criticizing others	Being persecuted for righteousness sake
Laziness	Faithful work

Some people wrongly believe that everyone in heaven will have equal rewards because we are all saved by God's grace. While it is true that salvation is a gift that can't be earned, rewards are bonuses bestowed for faithful service. God lets us decide how we will build on the foundation and will reward us accordingly. This unique opportunity to build with gold, silver, and precious stones is available for all who wish to dedicate their lives for the glory of God.

Losing Rewards

It is possible to lose rewards by doing evil or having the wrong motives. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."(2 Corinthians 5:10)

Our bad deeds will not be judged as sins, but as the wood, hay, and straw which will be burned up (1 Corinthians 3:12). The believer's works, not the believer himself, will be tested by fire on that day. "If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (v. 15).

Imagine a man spending his entire life constructing a house. When he is finished, his house catches fire while he is inside. Fortunately, he is able to escape from his flaming house. Although the builder survives, his work is burned up. Some Christians spend their entire lives on earth building with wood, hay, and straw. When the flame comes to test the quality of their works, all their deeds will be destroyed and lost forever. They will be admitted into heaven, but will be saved "as through fire." They will not have any rewards in heaven and will not enjoy the eternal privileges like those who lived faithfully for the Lord.

At the judgment seat of Christ, many people's work will also go up in flames. Probably everyone will have at least some work burned up. Haven't you ever done anything selfish? Say goodbye to

it. Bitterness, complaining, gossip, and evil behavior will no doubt result in the loss of rewards. "Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

What are the Rewards?

I've heard Christians say, "I don't care anything about rewards in heaven." Although this sounds humble, it is an insult to God and what He has revealed in Scripture about rewards. Eternal rewards can actually give you motivation to live right when you are going through a difficult time.

Think about it. **Some athletes train for years to win a 10-second race so they can wear a gold medal.** If you did away with the medals, it would take away their motivation to train. Do you understand that each reward in heaven is FAR better than an Olympic gold medal? Do you understand that heavenly rewards will endure FOREVER? Do you understand that denying yourself in this life will pay off in the NEXT life? Can you see how understanding about rewards will motivate you to keep a good attitude and live more faithfully?

We will not completely understand what the rewards are until after we get to heaven. We just know they will be beyond our wildest imaginations and are worth pursuing. Those who are wise will seek to live their lives on earth to please God, knowing that He will reward you forever.

- Jesus said we would "leap for joy" if we could see them. (Luke 6:23)
- When Jesus told us to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," He was talking about rewards. (Matt. 6:20).
- Paul says to seek the things above where Christ is, not the things on earth. (Col 3:1-2).

Are you ready to be examined by God? If you have accepted Jesus as Lord and are living to please Him, you will do just fine.

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