



By Design: A Tale of Two Thrones

Jumping right in this morning:

- If you have your Bible, turn to **2 Corinthians 5:6-10** and **Revelation 20:11-15**.
- If you are taking notes, we will be looking at two thrones in the Scriptures...
 - The Great White Throne of Judgement (throne of condemnation)
 - The Bema or The Judgement Seat of Christ (throne of commendation)

Hebrews 9:27

“It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.”

We will start with the most familiar throne of judgement for most believers. The throne of condemnation...

The Great White Throne of Judgement – Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw *a great white throne* and *him who was seated on it*. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. *The dead were judged according to what they had done* as recorded in the books. **13** The *sea gave up the dead* that were in it, and *death and Hades gave up the dead* that were in them, and *each person was judged according to what they had done*. **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. **15** *Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Jesus is the judge who is seated on the Great White Throne:

- V. 11 – Jesus is the one seated on it...
- We know this from Matthew 25:31-46 and John 5:21-24...

John 5:21-24

21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. **22** *For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son*, **23** that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

(put Revelation 20:11-15 back on the screen when we move on to the next point...)

All the dead are present for this judgement (no exceptions)...

- V. 13

The dead are judged according to what they had done, as it is written in the books...

- V.12-13

Only those whose names are found in the Lambs Book of Life are able to escape this throne of condemnation...

- V.15

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Every believer, every person who has put their trust and faith in Jesus, will escape the condemnation of this throne of judgement. They will receive grace upon grace. Grace will be poured out at our second throne of judgement...

The Bema (The Judgement Seat of Christ) – 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 ***for we walk by faith, not by sight.*** 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be ***away from the body and at home with the Lord.*** 9 So whether we are at home or away, ***we make it our aim to please him.*** 10 For we must all appear before ***the judgment seat [BEMA] of Christ,*** so that ***each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.***

What is a Bema?



- Paul often used athletes as an illustration for believers.
- The Greco-Roman culture was full of athletic competitions, arenas, and games.
- For athletes, the Bema seat was a throne of commendation, not condemnation.
- The judge of the games observed the competition from His throne, then called all qualified athletes to himself at the end of the competition to commend them and award them for the way they competed.
 - No athlete was beaten or exiled at the Bema.
 - Rather, athletes encountered the gain or loss of rewards at the Bema.

So, what is the Bema of Christ?

The Bema of Christ is a second judgement seat of Jesus. Where the Great White Throne is a judgement seat of condemnation for all those who had never put their faith and trust in Jesus, the Bema is a judgment seat of commendation, where Jesus Himself will test the works of the saints and reward (or not reward) them accordingly.

Just like the Great White Throne, Jesus will be the judge at the Bema...

- V. 10 – the judgement seat ***of Christ***.
- John 5:22-23 – He will receive honor equal with the Father.

The works of Christians will be judged by Jesus at the Bema...

- The biblical support for God's judgement of our works is overwhelming! The works of Christians will be judged at the bema.
- V. 10 – Receive what is due based on what they did in the body.

Romans 14:10

10 Why do you pass judgment on **your brother**? Or you, why do you despise **your brother**? For **we will all stand before the judgment seat of God**;

For our vernacular, "judgement seat of Christ" is not a great translation for "bema" in this context. It is appropriate to think of this throne as a place of rewards, a place where Jesus the just judge commends those who "competed well," (1 Cor. 9), rewards those who "compete according to the rules" (2 Tim. 2:5)... so...

This is not a throne of condemnation for believers, but a throne of reward (or loss of reward)...

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a **foundation** other than that which is laid, **which is Jesus Christ**. 12 Now if anyone **builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw**— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and **the fire will test what sort of work each one has done**. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, **he will receive a reward**. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, **he will suffer loss**, though **he himself will be saved**, but only as through fire.

1. Jesus the just judged will test every work His followers have done in this life.
2. Those works which are eternal will survive His judgement and will be rewarded!
3. Those works which are of wood, hay, and straw will be consumed by His judgement until nothing remains but the foundation.

What is the nature of the reward?

- There can be a lot of speculation based on Scripture of what type of reward we will receive.
- Undoubtedly, this reward is currently beyond our full comprehension (spiritual realm).
- At least one thing is clear in Scripture – we will receive a commendation from Jesus Himself!

COMMENDATION = RECOGNITION, HONOR, PRAISE, GOOD REPORT --- FROM JESUS!!!

Giving commendations to those who's faith leads to obedience and good works has been a practice of God's from the beginning...

Hebrews 11:1-6

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it **the people of old received their commendation**. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which **he was commended** as righteous, **God commending him by accepting his gifts**. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken **he was commended as having pleased God**. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

- **Noah** had faith that led him to obedience and good works and he was commended.
- **Abraham** had faith that led him to obedience and good works and he was commended.
- **Sarah** had faith that led her to obedience and good works and she was commended.
- **Isaac** had faith that led him to obedience and good works and he was commended.
- **Jacob** had faith that led him to obedience and good works and he was commended.
- **Joseph** had faith that led him to obedience and good works and he was commended.
- **Moses** had faith that led him to obedience and good works and he was commended.

THIS DOCTRINE OF COMMENDATION for faith that leads to obedience and good works is continued with Jesus...

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS:

Matthew 25:21

His master said to him, '**Well done, good and faithful servant**. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

We all receive the reward of heaven, but not all will receive commendation from Jesus at the Bema!

You are fooling yourself if you think that receiving a commendation from Jesus at the Bema will not be of great significance and among the highest treasures that all of heaven has to offer!

- Saying that rewards and recognition don't matter that much to you is a false sense of humility.

- If receiving a commendation from Jesus doesn't excite your heart and stir your faith, there is something wrong with your heart.
 - Perhaps your faith needs to be stirred up!
 - Perhaps your heart has been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
 - Perhaps you don't know Jesus!
 - **Insert Gospel images here...**

What's the point of all this?

1. Only God is the just judge!

2 Timothy 4:8

In the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing**.

God Judges Differently...

- Samuel – Man judges the outward appearance, but the Lord weighs the heart.
 - Widows Mite
 - **ONLY HE CAN TAKE ALL THIS INTO ACCOUNT!**
 - It comes down to your heart. Are you seeking the praise of men, or the reward of Jesus?
2. DOCTRINE OF REWARDS & GOOD WORKS - Grace upon grace upon grace... (the doctrine of good works and eternal rewards adds to the doctrine of grace, and it does not subtract).

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. **It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- It is natural for people to seek the praise of men in the flesh. It is just as natural for men to seek the commendation of Jesus in the Spirit! You are a new creation! That is where the motivation, the ambition, to use our life for good works unto God comes from!
3. You can trust Jesus with your whole life! You will not be disappointed.
 - a. First, trust Him with your sins and escape the condemnation.
 - b. Then, trust Him with your life and receive the commendation He desires to give!
 - i. How? No one will be more rewarded in heaven than Jesus! (Philippians 2)
 - ii. If you want to receive the greatest reward, spend your life doing what He did.
 - iii. Believe you are the new creation in Christ! Let Jesus live His life through you.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under

compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And **God is able to make all grace abound to you**, so that having *all sufficiency in all things at all times*, you may **abound in every good work**.