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| **Bema Seat of Christ    Believers Judgment by Christ**  Perhaps one of the most misunderstood concepts by Christians is the Judgment Seat of Christ. The mere mention of this event strikes fear and dread in most Christians: An event thought of as something unpleasant that must happen before the joys of Heaven and being with our Lord and loved ones can be experienced. A proper Biblical understanding of this event will not only remove fear of this event, but will also motivate Christians to serve our Lord in the limited time we have left. Having a proper Biblical understanding of the Judgment Seat of Christ will answer your questions about:   1. When Will It Happen? 2. Are We Judged For Sin We Have Committed? 3. What Criteria Will We Be Judged On? 4. What Are The Rewards/Crowns? 5. What About Those Who Have Accepted Christ But Have Turned From Him: “Once Saved, Always Saved”?   The Judgment Seat of Christ is reserved for the judgment of Christians only--born again believers in Christ Jesus. If a person is unsaved and dies in sin, he will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment following Christ's millennial reign on earth.  Many times the Judgment Seat of Christ is referred to by Biblical scholars as “The Bema Seat”. The reason for this is that the phrase “judgment seat” is taken from one Greek word, “bema” which translated from Greek means "judgment seat". During the time of Christ, this word could refer to the platform on which a ruler or judge decided if a person was guilty of a crime. But in light of Paul’s many references to athletic competition in the New Testament, he was likely using the term as it applied to Greek sports. If the winner of a particular contest had followed the rules of competition and won, he was honored at the bema. There he was crowned with a laurel wreath.  In the city of Corinth, a stone platform was constructed to support the Bema seat (judgment seat) of the local officials. The seat was used to give out awards to athletes for their competitive performances (usually a crown wreath of leaves), but also to address legal charges brought against individuals. The great Apostle Paul was quite familiar with this seat. This is where he was brought before Gallio, who was the proconsul of Achaia at the Bema seat ([Acts 18:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2018:12&version=31)). This seat was also what Paul referred to in [2 Corinthians 5:9-10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205:9-10;&version=31;) as the "Judgment Seat of Christ". In this context, Paul explains to us that this is where the Christian will receive an evaluation for works done in the body, whether good or bad.  [2 Corinthians 5:9-10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205:9-10;&version=31;) 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.  Note: In this second verse, the Greek word that is translated into English as “bad” is probably better understood as “worthless” or “useless to God’s kingdom”. (See [1 Corinthians 3:10-15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203:10-15&version=31))  **When Will It Happen**  The Judgment of believers will occur immediately following the rapture. The timing of the Judgment Seat of Christ is given in the following scriptures:  In [Luke 14:12-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2014:12-14;&version=31;), reward is associated with the resurrection. The rapture is when the church is resurrected. The term Church refers to believers.  [Luke 14:12-14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2014:12-14;&version=31;) 12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."  In [Revelation 19:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2019:8;&version=31;), when the Lord returns with His bride at the end of the tribulation, she is seen already rewarded. Her reward is described as fine linen, the righteous acts of the saints undoubtedly the result of rewards.  [Revelation 19:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2019:8;&version=31;) 8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)  In [2 Timothy 4:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204:8;&version=31;) and [1 Corinthians 4:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204:5;&version=31;), rewards are associated with "that day" and with the Lord's coming. Again, for the church this means the rapture.  [2 Timothy 4:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204:8;&version=31;) 8 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.  [1 Corinthians 4:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204:5;&version=31;) 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.  So the order of events will be:   1. The rapture which includes our glorification/resurrection bodies 2. Exaltation into the heavens with the Lord 3. Examination before the Bema 4. Compensation or reward   **We Are Not Judged For Sin**  Although it is tremendously serious with eternal ramifications, the Judgment Seat of Christ is not a place or time when the Lord will mete out punishment for sins committed by a child of God. Rather, it is a place where rewards will be given, or lost, depending on how one has conducted his life for the Lord.  It is important to emphasize that the Judgment Seat of Christ *does not* determine salvation; that was determined by Christ's sacrifice on behalf of the blood bought believer ([1 John 2:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%202:2;&version=31;)), and the believer's faith in Him ([John 3:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203:16;&version=31;)). All confessed sins are forgiven and believers will never be condemned for them ([Romans 8:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208:1;&version=31;)). To say otherwise would deny the completeness of the death of Jesus Christ, and nullify God's promise that "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" ([Hebrews 10:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2010:17;&version=31;)).  Instead, the purpose of this bema judgment by Jesus Christ is to reward believers based on how faithfully they served Him ([1 Corinthians 9:4-27, 2 Timothy 2:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=(1%20Corinthians%209:4-27,%202%20Timothy%202:5;&version=31;)). Even so, this judgment will also deal with a loss of rewards. Again, Paul tells us, in his letter to the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad." The Greek word translated as "bad" in this phrase, is based upon the Greek word Phaulos. According to Strong's dictionary (#5337), the primary definition of Phaulos is "easy, slight, ordinary, mean, worthless, of no account."  [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203:12-15;&version=31;) says that: "12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his 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 man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”  Elsewhere, the New Testament confirms that children of God are covered by grace and will not be punished for sins ([1 Thessalonians 5:9-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%205:9-11;&version=31;)). The Judgment Seat of Christ focuses primarily on rewards, not punishment. However, we will feel remorse and regret due to the poor choices we made in life and the rewards we forfeited. The bema seat does not deal with the problem of sin. For Christians, that problem was dealt with at the cross.  **We Are Not Judged For Sin**  Quoted from John MacArthur**:**You know I remember when I was a little kid, hearing some guy say, "You know, you may be a Christian, but someday all your sins will be flashed on a big screen."  Did you ever hear anybody say that?  Boy that scared the life out of me.  I thought to myself, "Well, what's the sense of forgiveness if all that stuff going to happen then?"  And I have heard people say that, but that is not what the Bible teaches.  Your sins are forgiven and even God Himself says, "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more."  They are removed as far as what?  As far as the East is from the West.  How far is that?  That's far!  The East is from the West; they are buried in the depths of the sea; they are forgotten by God, because of the Blood of Jesus Christ.  You say, "Well, wait a minute, doesn't it say that we have to give an account?"   Yes, but listen to [2 Corinthians 5:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205:10;&version=31;), this is very important, "We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ."  Now the word here is not "krino" verb or "krima" which means condemnation, or even "katakrima" which is even a stronger word.  It is not damnation, condemnation, judgment, or punishment.  But, the word is "bema."  And it is the "bema" that was speaking of a reward.  I was in Corinth, the ruins of Corinth, and they took me to the "Bema" that was there.  And whenever they had the Corinthian games, which was the major athletic event, they would take the winners up on the "Bema."  And what it was, was a place of rewards, not a place of punishment, only the winners went there.  So he is saying here, "We will all appear before the "Bema" of Christ, so that each one may be rewarded, for his deeds in the body.  The only evaluation for us future, will be the level of reward that we should receive. And then he says this, "According to what he has done, whether it is good or bad", and would you please note that word bad. That is the word in the Greek "phaulos", it really means useless, worthless.  It is not "kakia," evil, wicked.  It’s useless.  And what is left then to evaluate there, our sins are forgiven, our sins are covered?  The only thing to evaluate is what, out of our life, was spiritually valuable and thus worthy of reward, and what was just worthless, useless, inconsequential, like mowing the lawn, or whatever.  Not evil, you just don't reward it spiritually.  So I believe that our reward in the future is going to be a reward related to what we have done and that the waste will be burned away. The useless things burned away, and what is left, will be the gold, silver, and precious stones.  The other things are not bad, remember [1 Corinthians 3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203;&version=31;), "Wood, hay, and stubble?"  Wood isn't bad, you build things out of it.  Hay isn't bad, horses eat it.  Even stubble is used to make bricks.  But it just doesn't have any spiritual value, and when fire gets to it, it burns it up.  So there will be a reward for us, but it will be the gold, silver, and precious stone, that is left after the rest is set aside, by which we will be rewarded.  And the Apostle Paul looked forward to that, with all of his heart.  He said, you remember that as he looked to the future, "There would come a time when God would reveal the hidden things of the heart", [1 Corinthians 4:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204:5;&version=31;).  And then he said, "Then shall every man have", what?  "Praise from God!"  The only thing that will be at the coming "Bema" will be praise and reward, sin will be already done away with.  It is already been exposed, and it has already been covered at the cross of Jesus Christ.  The truth of the matter is that our lives are going to be filled with a lot of things which will bring us no reward. Some things will bring us chastening. Some things are just neutral; they’re not moral--they’re just stuff that gets burned up. It isn’t that we’re going to be judged or punished; it’s just that when it comes to reward time, that’s sorted out. So, I believe that you’re a new creation: your faith will work, your love will labor, your hope will endure, you will be different--you will have different desires, different longings, different goals, different aspirations. But, you’ll still have in your life two things: sin and waste--just useless things. And when you come to the judgment seat of Christ, does the sin have to be dealt with there? Does it? No, why? Where was the sin dealt with? On the cross. So, we’re not talking about sin; that’s already dealt with. No condemnation, no issue. But, when you get there, you’ve got what’s left of your life; the sin--that’s dealt with. What is left then is the righteous deeds--gold, silver, precious stones--and then the “stuff.” And when it comes time to reward you, the Lord will just consume the stuff, and what remains is the gold, silver, precious stones. That’s why, in a sense, it’s not only important that you avoid sin, it’s also important that you avoid *waste* in your life.  Remember [Hebrews 12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012;&version=31;)? In [Hebrews 12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012;&version=31;), the writer says, “Lay aside”--for “we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses”--you know that? “Therefore, run the race…lay aside the sin and the weight which so easily besets us”--that’s in chapter 12.  He says, “Lay aside every encumbrance *and* the sin”. Well, encumbrance must be something other than sin, and what he is saying is, don’t clutter your life with needless stuff. So, you know, there are people who fill up--I call it people who fill up their life with trivia. It isn’t evil; it’s just insignificant. That’s the encumbrance. It’s like the illustration I used when I taught Hebrews was: now, you can run the 100-yard-dash with an overcoat *if you want*, but you’re not going to be very fast. And, when it comes to reward time, you’re going to be at the rear end. Why not junk the overcoat and run?  So I think what he is saying there is that at the judgment seat of Christ, even though we are redeemed and even though we are the children of God and even though our hearts have been changed and transformed and our desires are really right and we long to honor Christ, because we are still incarcerated in the unredeemed flesh, we can fill our lives with stuff that really has no eternal consequences. And that’s going to be just literally burned away. The fire here--know this--is not a fire of judgment. It’s just burning away the waste to purify the real stuff that is to be rewarded.  **What We Will Be Judged On**  Although the judgment seat of Christ is focused on rewards rather than punishment, we *will* regret having spent time on foolish priorities and worthless deeds. Our hearts will break when we realize we’ve squandered our lives after all our Savior did for us. We will lament that we have so little to offer Him in return for His supreme sacrifice at the cross and faithfulness to us throughout our lives.  Dr. H.L. Wilmington has done a good job of gleaning the truth about the things upon which Christians will be examined at the Judgment Seat of Christ. They are as follows:   1. **How we treat other believers:**  [Hebrews 6:10, Matthew 10:41-42](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%206:10,%20Matthew%2010:41-42;&version=31;) 2. **How we exercise our authority over others:** [Hebrews 13:17, James 3:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2013:17,%20James%203:1;&version=31;) 3. **How we employ our God-given abilities:** [1 Corinthians 12:4, 12:12, 12:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012:4,%2012:12,%2012:2;&version=31;), [2 Timothy 1:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%201:6&version=31), [1 Peter 4:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%204:10;&version=31;) Add to these Scriptures Jesus' teaching of the parables of the ten pounds ([Luke 19: 11-26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2019:%2011-26;&version=31;)) and the talents ([Matthew 25:14-29](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2025:14-29;&version=31;)). Each believer has at least one talent ([1 Corinthians 7:12, Ephesians 4:7, 1 Peter 4:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%207:12,%20Ephesians%204:7,%201%20Peter%204:10;&version=31;)). There are 18 of these gifts ([Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012,%201%20Corinthians%2012,%20Ephesians%204;&version=31;)). It's up to each believer to find/discern his or her gifts. 4. **How we use our money:** [2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 1 Timothy 6:17-19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%209:6-7,%201%20Timothy%206:17-19;&version=31;) 5. **How we spend our time:** [Psalm 90:12, Ephesians 5:16, Colossians 4:5, 1 Peter 1:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2090:12,%20Ephesians%205:16,%20Colossians%204:5,%201%20Peter%201:17;&version=31;) 6. **How much we suffer for Jesus:** [Matthew 5:11-12, Mark 10:29-30, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Peter 4:12-13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%205:11-12,%20Mark%2010:29-30,%20Romans%208:18,%202%20Corinthians%204:17,%201%20Peter%204:12-13;&version=31;) 7. **How we run the particular race God has chosen for us:** [1 Corinthians 9:24, Philippians 2:16, 3:13-14, Hebrews 12:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:24,%20Philippians%202:16,%203:13-14,%20Hebrews%2012:1;&version=31;) 8. **How effectively we control the old nature:** [1 Corinthians 9:25-27, 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Corinthians 16:3, Philippians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:25-27,%202%20Timothy%202:15,%201%20Corinthians%2016:3,%20Philippians%201:10,%201%20Thessalonians%202:4;&version=31;) 9. **How many souls we witness to and win to Christ:** [Proverbs 11:30, Daniel 12:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2011:30,%20Daniel%2012:3,%201%20Thessalonians%202:19-20;&version=31;) 10. **How we react to temptation:** [James 1:2-3, Revelation 3:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%201:2-3,%20Revelation%203:10;&version=31;) 11. **How much the doctrine of the rapture means to us:** [2 Timothy 4:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204:8;&version=31;) 12. **How faithful we are to the Word of God and the flock of God:** [Acts 20:26-28, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, 1 Peter 5:2-4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2020:26-28,%202%20Timothy%204:1-2,%201%20Peter%205:2-4;&version=31;)   As we move deeper into this subject, we discover that God also will investigate the motives behind one's works. In other words, the question will be: "Why did you hold the office of deacon, elder, or Sunday school teacher? Why did you sing or perform solos? What was your motive in being a counselor, and usher, a bus driver? What purpose was there in desiring to be a full-time Christian worker? Was it for power, prestige, or pride? Was it to be noticed, to be lauded, and applauded?"  [Matthew 6:1-6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%206:1-6;&version=31;) 1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.  [Matthew 6:16-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%206:16-18;&version=31;) 16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.  [Romans 2: 15-16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%202:%2015-16;&version=49;) 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.  There is no doubt as to the meaning of Christ's startling words. He declares that there are two places to be rewarded, here upon earth as one seeks the praise of men or later in heaven when the Father who saw the works performed in secret without notoriety and rewards those who did the job simply out of love for Him. When Jesus returns to call His people unto himself in the twinkling of an eye and the judgment begins, what will your motives have been in the Christian race?  [1 Corinthians 4:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%204:5;&version=31;) states “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God”. This teaching is also found in [1 Corinthians 3:11, 15:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203:11,%2015:11;&version=31;) “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his 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 man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames”.  Again, there is no doubt about the explicit teaching within this portion of scripture. It states, the fire shall try every man's work and show what it is.  **Rewards, The Crowns**  The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a crowning day for those Christians who will receive rewards for their works. ([1 Corinthians 9:4-27; 2 Timothy 2:5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:4-27;%202%20Timothy%202:5;&version=31;)). Unlike the laurel and ivy crowns received from officials at the Bema seat of the Olympics in Corinth, the child of God will receive eternal crowns from the Lord Jesus Himself. There are five such crowns to be rewarded:  **The Incorruptible Crown** This is the Runner’s crown  “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 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. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:24-27&version=31)). Once again, Paul has in mind the athlete in the Roman arena. Before the contest, each participant practiced self-discipline, being temperate in all things. As is true of the world today, there were doubtless many pleasures and pastimes that the athletes might have entered into and enjoyed, but they denied themselves these things in order to do their best, and receive the crown of the victor. The incorruptible crown for the Christian is the victor's crown for those who keep the flesh under control and bring it into subjection. It is a conquering of the old nature. We see in verse 24 that though there are numerous runners yet only one becomes the winner. The analogy is that though multitudes of believers have run and are in the race of Christian service, competing for "good works", however it will be but a minority who receive the runner's crown. Hence, "Run that you may obtain."  The Greek athletes were temperate in all things, subjecting their bodies to the most stringent health rules. They trained, they exercised, and they abstained from anything that would render them unfit for the contest. [Verse 25 [King James]](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:24-27;&version=9;): “And every man that striveth for the mastery [victory] is temperate [under self-control] in ALL things”. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” ([Hebrews 12:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012:1;&version=31;)) The result? An incorruptible crown!  We must also keep in mind, to qualify for this crown we must be faithful in our work (whatever it is) until the end. That is why some refer to this crown as the Worker's Crown. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an Incorruptible" ([1 Corinthians 9:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Corinthians%209:25;&version=9;)). Labor for the Lord in any lawful fashion is a candidate for the Incorruptible Crown. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" ([Colossians 3:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%203:23;&version=31;)). The concept that "full-time Christian workers", i.e., pastors, evangelists, missionaries, etc., are alone doing the LORD's work is entirely false. **Any** Saint who faithfully and honestly labors to supply his own temporal needs-- and that of his family-- does the LORD's work. "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you" ([1 Thessalonians 4:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204:11;&version=31;)). Also, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." ([1 Timothy 5:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy%205:8;&version=31;)).  **The Crown of Rejoicing** This is the soul-winner's crown.  "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy." ([1 Thessalonians 2:19-20](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%202:19-20;&version=31;)). The first thing that a Christian should pray for and seek to cultivate is the desire, ability, and wisdom to win lost souls to Jesus Christ. Paul was confident that when he would stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Thessalonian converts would guarantee a crown for all those who shared in bringing them to Christ. Every time an individual is converted, there is joy in Heaven; but at the day of the giving of rewards, the soul-winner will be exceedingly joyful, when those are presented to God whom he had won to Christ. What is our hope of reward as Christ's witnesses? The answer is in those who will be in Heaven because of our prayers, gifts, preaching, and personal work.  [Daniel 12:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%2012:3;&version=31;) declares “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever”. Stand outside on a clear night, fix your eyes upon heaven and study God's breathtaking creation. Stars, billions of miles away, twinkle as plainly as the flickering candle on the dining room table. Is it any wonder that [Proverbs 11:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2011:30;&version=31;) states, He that wins souls is wise. The inference here is: "He who does not win souls is foolish." Why? He cast aside eternal rewards as though they were bubble gum wrappers. Wise men have more sense than this.  **The Crown of Righteousness** This is the watcher’s crown  "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." ([2 Timothy 4:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204:8;&version=31;)). Here the character of the reward corresponds to the character of the Giver. Both are said to be righteous. The doctrine of our Lord's return is regarded very highly by God. In spite of the fact that Jesus said He would come again, there are many people who scoff at the thought of Christ's appearing. This, as well as other Biblical truths, have brought suffering and hardship, and in some cases death, to those who insisted on preaching and teaching them. But how wonderful to know that God has prepared a special reward for all who look for that blessed hope, who wait for His son from Heaven, and who love His appearing.  This is reasonable when one realizes that "expectancy" and "purity" are closely related. One cannot longingly look for Christ return and practice abominable sins. The two never coexist in a rational mind. That is why [1 John 3:2-3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%203:2-3&version=31) states “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure”.  Adulterers, fornicators, homosexuals, drunkards, drug addicts, extortionist, swindlers, liars, and earthly minded are not anxiously awaiting Christ's return. Neither are carnal believers who neglect the Bible, prayer, God's house, soul-winning, and personal holiness. No, those who look daily and expectantly are not among the earthly minded, who sit in bars, theaters, rock concerts, gambling casinos, and other pagan dens. They do not want to be found there when Jesus comes. Their desire, the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ ([Titus 2:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Titus%202:13;&version=31;)), makes them consistently live for His return. They want to be commended but congratulated and crowned in their fight to the finish. They do not want a confrontation producing consternation and castigation at that day. They long to hear Jesus say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."  Because the Savior’s appearing is closely aligned with holiness of life, it is to be expected that the carnal rebel and refuse the teaching of prophecy. They cry, "Do not preach prophecy! It is sensational and speculative nonsense anyway". One should expect this from the indifferent, the lethargic, the worldly, and the backslidden. They definitely do not want to hear about a time when they must meet Christ with wasted lives because his appearing means the disintegration and dissolution of the selfish substandard works. They know that they are going to be among the "ashamed" (see [1 John 2:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%202:28;&version=31;)), and that they shall be saved as by fire ([1 Corinthians 3:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203:15;&version=31;)). They hate to think of meeting Jesus empty handed and being "rejects" at the Judgment Seat. Small wonder they dislike this Bible doctrine. But, like it or not, it will happen!  **The Crown of Life** This is the Sufferer’s Crown  "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." ([James 1:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%201:12;&version=31;)). "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." ([Revelation 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202:10;&version=31;)).  The Crown of Life is reserved for those who have given all their lives for the sake of the Gospel. Not all of our Lord's witnesses have been called to suffering and martyrdom. Not all would be willing to pay with their lives to take the message of salvation to the lost. How thoughtful and just our heavenly Father was when He prepared a martyr's crown for those who suffer persecution for Christ's sake! Though some of us will not receive the Crown of Life, we will rejoice with those who refused to count the cost and have died proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.  "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." ([Matthew 5:10-12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%205:10-12;&version=31;)). The reward will also be presented to those who bore illness and infirmity with a smile believing that all things work together for good to them that love God ([Romans 8:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%208:28;&version=31;)).  The crown is also given to those who are faithful unto the end, [Revelation 2:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202:10;&version=31;) declares “Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life”. This is not a reward for salvation, but for service, and is presented to those who remain faithful throughout life, it is the same crown mentioned previously in [James 1:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%201:12;&version=31;) presented to all who bore trial and testing out of love for the Lord Jesus.  **The Crown of Glory** This is the Shepherd’s Crown  “Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ([1 Peter 5:2-5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205:2-5;&version=31;)). There are many who have been called and ordained by God to preach and teach His Word. These are the “*under shepherds*” who care for the flock of God during the absence of the Chief Shepherd. This award is mentioned in [1 Peter 5:1-4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%205:1-4;&version=31;) and is undoubtedly reserved for faithful ministers.  Peter in writing to the elders or spiritual shepherds, exhorts his fellow minister's to "feed the flock". God so loves His precious people that He wants the pastors to meet the nutritious needs of His children, spiritually. Hence, the shepherds are to feast on the Word of God daily; in order to meet the needs of the spiritually hungry. This takes discipline and perseverance. It means that the golf game, the tennis court, and other recreational amusements must be in second place. It means that the obedient preacher cannot wait until the last minute to prepare the "Saturday Night Special" for the Lord's Day.  The ministers are to lead exemplary lives. They are not to be power-crazy dictators. Their leadership must be in love. They are to rule the Church as God's appointed directors, but with compassion. As rulers they are not to be board-dominated "puppets" which is an insult to God and His Word. [1 Timothy 3:4-5](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy%203:4-5;&version=31;) states a minister should rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of [or rule] the church of God?)  He must live according to the God-demanded requirements mentioned in [1 Timothy 3:2-7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy%203:2-7;&version=31;) which says, “2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap”.  The Lord also gives us a list of rewards that he will give to all who overcome in Revelation chapters 2-3  [**Revelation 2:11**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202:11&version=AMP)11He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). He who overcomes (is victorious) shall in no way be injured by the second death.  [**Revelation 2:17**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202:17&version=AMP) 17He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). To him who overcomes (conquers), I will give to eat of the manna that is hidden, and I will give him a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone, which no one knows or understands except he who receives it.  [**Revelation 2:26-28**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202:26-28&version=AMP) 26And he who overcomes (is victorious) and who obeys My commands to the [very] end [doing the works that please Me], I will give him authority and power over the nations;  27And he shall rule them with a sceptre (rod) of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, and [his power over them shall be] like that which I Myself have received from My Father;  28And I will give him the Morning Star.  [**Revelation 3:5**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%203:5&version=AMP) 5Thus shall he who conquers (is victorious) be clad in white garments, and I will not erase or blot out his name from the Book of Life; I will acknowledge him [as Mine] and I will confess his name openly before My Father and before His angels  [**Revelation 3:12**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%203:12&version=AMP) 12He who overcomes (is victorious), I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God; he shall never be put out of it or go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name.  [**Revelation 3:21**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%203:21&version=AMP) 21He who overcomes (is victorious), I will grant him to sit beside Me on My throne, as I Myself overcame (was victorious) and sat down beside My Father on His throne.  **Once Saved Always Saved (But Tragic Loss of Reward)**  [1 John 2:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%202:28&version=31) declares “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming”. Notice carefully that when Christ returns, all believers are summoned into His presence-the confident and the ashamed. The confident appear before the tribunal with "good works" whereas the ashamed have naught but "bad works" (see [2 Corinthians 5:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%205:10;&version=31;)).  This is exceedingly important to understand because multitudes today think that one sin can keep a child of God out of heaven. The text plainly states that the "ashamed" meet Christ at His appearing. At the sound of the trumpet, when the dead in Christ rise first and living believers join the dead to meet Christ in the clouds (see [1 Thessalonians 4:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204:16;&version=31;)), the "ashamed" also enter heaven, but the abundant entrance is reserved for those who earned it upon earth (see [2 Peter 1:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Peter%201:11;&version=31;)).  If English means anything, and it does, this text proves that the wayward go home to meet Christ, though ashamed. Since one can only bear shame for error and wrongdoing, then it is dogmatically clear that the wrongdoers meet Christ at His appearing or return. I grant you that they are embarrassed and lose all of their rewards, but they are nevertheless present at the roll call of the ages, though saved as by fire ([1 Corinthians 3:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%203:15;&version=31;)), by the "skin of their teeth," to use a modern day expression.  Multitudes of God's people could do so much more for Christ if they would, but the flesh stands in the way. When they do serve, it is often with selfish motives. Modern Christianity has become big business. Religious performers today charge exorbitant rates. Some receive $1,000 to $2,500 for a performance. What a judgment of terror awaits these mercenary "gospel entertainers". Though saved by fire, their works will dissolve into incinerated ashes. The wood, hay, and stubble will disintegrate because they had their reward here on Earth.  Then again, there are those who have little or no time for spiritual exercises. They seldom read God's Holy Word, seldom attend God's house. Seldom give their tithes, and never win souls. This is sin! [James 4:17](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%204:17;&version=31;) states, “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins”. These sins of omission (failing to do God's will) also produce remorse in that day. If this is describing you, it is not too late to change. As long as one has the breath of life, you can decide to do the will of God. Confess your sins, seek again your first love for Christ, rekindle the flames of devotion to the Lord Jesus immediately. Then use your opportunities to serve Him wisely.  Then, too, there will be many tears over neglected holiness. No doubt about it, God demands that His people live holy lives: “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” ([1 Thessalonians 4:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%204:7;&version=31;)). “who has saved us and called us to a holy life” ([2 Timothy 1:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%201:9;&version=31;)). “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord”. ([Hebrews 12:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2012:14;&version=31;)). "Be holy, because I am holy" ([1 Peter 1:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201:16;&version=31;)). This means that we are not to fashion ourselves according to the former lusts ([1 Peter 1:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%201:14;&version=31;)), and that we are to abstain from fleshly lusts ([1 Peter 2:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%202:11;&version=31;)), and that we are to put on Christ and not make any provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof ([Romans 13:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2013:14;&version=31;)).  What weeping, wailing, heartache, and heartbreak as they meet Jesus face to face. Their entrance into God's presence will not be abundant ([2 Peter 1:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Peter%201:11;&version=31;)), They shall be tremendously ashamed ([1 John 2:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%202:28;&version=31;)). No wonder the lukewarm are weeping. They blew it all. They suffered the loss of all things except salvation.  This loss extends beyond the loss of rewards for a meaningless life.  It includes losing, through foolish living, rewards previously earned through years of spiritual service. God has a system of addition and subtraction, pluses and minuses, on His books. Therefore, one's accumulation of "good works" can be wiped out swiftly through disobedient living. You do not believe it? “Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully” ([2 John 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20John%201:8;&version=31;)). “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown”. ([Revelation 3:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%203:11;&version=31;))  In simpler terminology, God says, "Hang on to your earned crown and do not let anyone entice you, mislead you, drag you down, or destroy the good works already accumulated or you will suffer loss." Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, also declares in [1 Corinthians 9:27](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209:27;&version=31;) “No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize”. He could not mean the loss of salvation because we have already seen that the "ashamed" are present at heaven's roll call through saved by fire. Instead, Paul is saying, "Look I am a red-blooded man with desires similar to others. However, I will not allow my flesh to control me. Instead, I constantly battle and batter my fleshly appetites into subjection. Yes, I keep my bodily appetites under control lest I lose everything I have ever earned." Now, if this be true for Paul, it is equally true for all. In fact outside of Christ, Paul's service record is unparalleled in the history of Christendom.  One who obeys God will not be sorry. The faithful will be rewarded a hundred fold at the Bema Seat. Scholars calculate that to be a 10,000 percent yield. No wonder Paul said in [2 Corinthians 9:6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%209:6;&version=31;) “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously”. One cannot out give God at 10,000 percent interest. [Galatians 6:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%206:7;&version=31;), often quoted to the unsaved, but directed to Christians concerning giving, states ”Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows”. If the judgment took place within the next 24 hours, would you lose some or all of your rewards? Millions are going home ashamed, embarrassed, and red-faced. The result will be intermittent weeping for 1,007 years. This is proven by studying the chronological outline of the Book of Revelation. Let's look at it.  The seven years of Tribulation follow in chapters 6-18. Christ returns to earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords ([Revelation 19:11-16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2019:11-16;&version=31;)). He rules the earth for 1,000 years ([Revelation 20:4-6](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2020:4-6;&version=31;)), and judges the world after the thousand years ([Revelation 20:11-15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2020:11-15;&version=31;)). Then, finally and forever, God wipes all tears away from their eyes ([Revelation 21:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2021:4;&version=31;)). Chronologically, this is after the Tribulation, after the Millennium. In other words, from the rapture call in [Revelation 4:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%204:1;&version=31;) onward, there is intermittent and spasmodic crying/remorse for the next 1,007 years. Is your foolish episode with the world that important to you? Will it be worth it all when you see Jesus? Do not lose out on rewards eternally for a short fling presently! |