Sunday, January 5, 2014—The Judgment Seat of Christ—Introduction: What is the JSC?

## Introduction

- This morning we are going to begin studying the subject of the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC).
   Throughout almost 14 year ministry I never preached an entire series of messages on this subject.
   I have taught on the subject as it has come up within passages we were studying but never an entire series.
- The subject of the JSC is a serious subject in Paul's epistles that warrants much attention from our Apostle.
- Over the course of the past 3 series I have been trying to ground the assembly in an understanding of who we are in Jesus Christ and how that reality ought to impact our thoughts, attitudes, and actions.
  - o *The Things Freely Given of God*—clearly established who we are in Jesus Christ by looking at the things believers are freely given of God.
  - o *The Battlefield of the Mind*—looked at the nature of the believer's warfare and sought to establish a Scriptural foundation for proper thinking as members of the body of Christ.
  - Heart of Thanksgiving—studied Paul's instruction to give thanks in everything and the role thanksgiving needs to play in our lives as believers.
- The goal of these series was to ground us in an understanding of positional truth and practical living. As we embark upon our new series on the JSC we are going to shift our focus to the serious side of our life and conduct as believers.
- Many have objected to the Grace Message on the grounds that if you teach people they are saved
  by grace through faith and under grace in their daily lives you are just giving them license to sin.
  A proper understanding of the JSC will reveal the folly of such thinking.
- Ephesians 2:8-9—the believer is justified by grace through faith without works. Works play no part in our salvation. Our salvation from the penalty of sin is based upon the work of Christ who died in our place and on our behalf.
- Romans 8:1—every saved member of the body of Christ has already been judged for his sins at Calvary. Since Christ put away all our sins (total forgiveness) by paying for them at Calvary, there are no more sins left to be dealt with.
- Ephesians 2:10—believers are however, created in Christ Jesus unto good works that God wants us to walk in. While works play no part in our justification believers are supposed to manifest good works in our daily lives.

- Philippians 2:12—Paul instructs the Philippians to "work out" their "own salvation with fear and trembling." This does not mean that we need to fear the punitive wrath of God but that we need to have a healthy respect for what God has done on our behalf which manifests itself in our conduct and how we live our lives.
- II Corinthians 5:10-11—all believers will "appear" before the judgment seat of Christ" Paul writes to "receive the things done in his body . . . whether it be good or bad." The Greek word translated "terror" in verse 11 is the same word translated "fear" in Philippians 2:12. As members of the body of Christ we will one day stand before the JSC to receive the things done in our bodies. This ought to provide a healthy respect i.e., "fear" or "terror" in terms of our life and service for Christ.
- The JSC is not about punishing believers for sin it is about rewarding believers for the service they rendered for Christ.

## What is the JSC?

- II Corinthians 5:10—the word translated "judgments seat" is the Greek word *bema*. The Greek word *bema* is one of two words translated "judgment seat" in the New Testament. Occurring only three times, the other word is *kriterion* which deals with the meting out of judgment and justice in a legal of judicial sense.
  - o James 2:6—"judgment seats"
  - o I Corinthians 6:2—"judge"
  - o I Corinthians 6:4—"judgments"
- Acts 7:5—in contrast the Greek word *bema* is found 12 times in the New Testament. In its most basic meaning *bema* is used as a unit of measure i.e., a "foot." The word *bema* is also used to describe a raised platform on which the judge sat during legal proceedings (and from which he pronounced his verdict) or the seat itself. Most of the examples of the use of term in the New Testament refer to human tribunals. (*Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 439)
  - o Matthew 27:19
  - o John 19:13
  - o Acts 12:21; 18:12, 16-17; 25:6, 10, 17
- Twice the word *bema* is used in relation to the JSC.
  - o Romans 14:10
  - o II Corinthians 5:10
- After quoting the lexicon work from Joseph Thayer, Alfred Plummer, and L. Sale-Harrison ("reward seat never used of a judicial bench") in his book *Things to Come*, J. Dwight Pentecost

concludes that the Greek word *bema* carries the following meaning: "... with this word are the ideas of prominence, dignity, authority, honor, and reward rather than the idea of justice and judgment. The word Paul chooses to describe the place before which this event takes place suggests its character." (220)

- C.R. Stam echoes the sentiments expressed by Pentecost in his commentary on II Corinthians. Regarding the definition of the word *bema* Stam writes, "... the dais upon which judges in court actions, or judges at sports events, stood, or sat. The judges at the former, of course, dealt out justice, while those at the latter dealt out rewards to those who excelled at sports events. . . This word is never used, however, in connection with God's judgment of the unsaved."
- Since the believers sin was judged by Christ and upon the cross and since the lost are never associated with the word *bema* in the New Testament Stam, Pentecost, and others have concluded that Paul's primary meaning when discussing the JSC is the rewarding of believers not the judgment of the unsaved.
- The JSC and the Great White Throne (GWT) are not the same. One (the JSC) is for the members of the body of Christ that comprise the church of this dispensation. The other (the GWT) is for the unsaved dead from every dispensation.
- Only saved members of the body of Christ will "appear" before the JSC.
  - o Romans 14:10—"we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Who is the "we" in this context? It is Paul along with the saints in Rome.
  - o Romans 14:12—"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
  - o II Corinthians 5:10—"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" Again who is the "we" in this context? Paul and the believers in Corinth.
- Revelation 20:11-15—the GWT depicts the final sentencing of the lost from every dispensation. The unsaved dead are cast into the lake of fire for all eternity.
  - Revelation 20:4-6—just as the JSC deals with the body of Christ only the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection and its accompanying judgment accomplishes the same thing for the kingdom saints of Israel's program. Those who take part in this event reign with Christ in his kingdom as the priests of God.
- The JSC is a different event from the GWT described in Revelation 20. Only saved members of the body of Christ from this dispensation will take part in the JSC. The purpose of the JSC is to reward believers for the things they have done in their bodies. The judicial pronunciation of not guilty has already been rendered when we were justified and declared righteous the moment we trusted in the finished word of Christ. If this were not so, i.e., if we were still lost, we would not stand before the JSC but the GWT.