

Sunday, January 12, 2014—The Judgment Seat of Christ—The JSC: When and Where?

Introduction/Review

- Last Sunday we began our new series on the JSC by looking at some basic information about the subject.
- First, we saw that there are two different Greek words translated judgment seat in the New Testament. The first is the word *kriterion* deals with the meting out of judgment and justice in a legal or judicial sense.
 - James 2:6—“judgment seats”
 - I Corinthians 6:2—“judge” last occurrence
 - I Corinthians 6:4—“judgments”
- Acts 7:5—the second Greek word is the word *bema*. . In its most basic meaning *bema* is used as a unit of measure i.e., a “foot.” In Acts 7:5 *bema* is used to describe a foot’s breath, or the amount of land that a foot can stand on. (EWB, *Lexicon and Concordance*)
- 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 this use of term in the New Testament refer to human tribunals. (*Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 439)
 - John 19:13
 - Acts 12:21—Herod gives a speech unto the people from the judgment seat
 - Acts 25:6, 10, 17—Festus heard the Jews charges against Paul from the judgment seat in the city of Caesarea.
- Twice (Rom. 14:10, II Cor. 5:10) the Apostle Paul uses the word *bema* in relation to the JSC. Only saved members of the body of Christ will “appear” before the JSC.
 - 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.
 - Romans 14:12—“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”
 - 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 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. 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 as a result of the verdict rendered at the GWT.

- Since the believer's sins were judged by Christ and upon the cross and since the lost are never associated with the word *bema* in the New Testament, 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 judicial pronouncement of not guilty has already been rendered when we were justified and declared righteous the moment we trusted in the finished work of Christ. If this were not so, i.e., if we were still lost, we would not stand before the JSC but the GWT.

The JSC: When and Where?

- Since only members of the body of Christ will stand before the JSC any information regarding the timing and location of the JSC will be gleaned from Paul's epistles. Paul is the only Biblical writer to use the expression JSC.
- Since all members of the body of Christ will stand before the JSC and many members of the body are currently "dead in Christ" the timing of the JSC is thereby affected. In other words, in order for all that Paul said about the JSC to be true, all the members of the body of Christ must be present. The JSC of Christ cannot happen until after the catching up (Rapture) of the church.
- I Thessalonians 4:13-17—at the catching away of the Church the "dead in Christ shall rise first" and then "we which are alive and remain shall" shall be caught up together with the dead in Christ "to meet the Lord in the air." This is first full assembly of the church the body of Christ. This event commonly referred to as the Rapture was part of the revelation committed to the Apostle Paul.
- I Corinthians 15:51—Paul states the fact that not all believers will sleep (die) but that we will all be changed was a mystery not previously known.
- I Corinthians 15:52—we shall all be changed, "in the twinkling of an eye." Who is the "we" that will be changed? The dead that "shall be raised" and "we" or those that are still alive when the event described occurs. In other words, both the "dead in Christ" and "we which are alive and remain" will take part in this event that Paul calls a mystery.
- Don't get confused in verse 52 by the expression "the last trump." Some have used that expression to teach that this verse is referring to the 7th and final trumpet in the book of Revelation and thereby have taught that the event Paul is describing here does not occur until the end of the tribulation.
- The word "trump" refers to the sound that a trumpet makes i.e., the blowing of a trumpet. There is a difference between the physical instrument the sound that instrument makes. Consider the following occurrences of the Greek word translated "trump" in I Cor. 15:52:
 - Matthew 24:31—"with a great sound of a trumpet"
 - I Corinthians 14:8—"for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound"

- Hebrews 11:19—“the sound of a trumpet”
- There are at least two “trumps” or soundings of a trumpet associated with the Rapture (catching up) of the church.
 - The first “trump” is the call to assembly that is heard at the initiation of the event that calls forth the dead in Christ from their graves. They are raised “incorruptible.” (I Thess. 4:16, I Cor. 15:52)
 - The “last trump” i.e., the second time (at least possibly more) the trumpet sounds after the entire body has been called to assembly “we which are alive and remain” or living when the event occurs are changed and given our incorruptible bodies (I Cor. 15:53).
- All of this was a mystery according to Paul in verse 51. That Christ should appear in the heavens to catch away the body of Christ is not a part of Old Testament promise and prophecy. Consider the following verses:
 - Zechariah 14:4—that Christ during the day of the Lord would bodily come back to earth and stand upon the Mount of Olives was foretold in the Old Testament.
 - Acts 1:10-12—from whence did Jesus ascend into heaven? From the Mount of Olives.
 - Revelation 19:11-16—this passage depicts the 2nd coming of Christ back to earth to make war upon his enemies. This even was foretold in Old Testament promise and prophecy.
- Colossians 3:4—the next time Christ appears we “shall also appear with him in glory.” The next time Christ appears it is to catch up the body of Christ to meet him in the air.
- Titus 2:13—as believers we are to looking for that blessed hope that is tied to the “glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”
- The next time Christ appears we will appear with him in glory. The next time Christ appears it will be to Rapture (catch up) his church to meet him in the air. The next time Christ appears it will be according to the revelation of the mystery committed to the Apostle Paul. The next time Christ appears it will be to close the dispensation of grace before the resumption and completion of his prophetic purpose in Israel. Christ’s appearing to catch away the church occurs before the 70th week of Daniel and is therefore pre-tribulational with respect to its timing.
- Therefore, the JSC cannot occur prior to the Rapture (catching up) of the church. Consequently, the appearing and catching up of the church must occur BEFORE the JSC. The JSC seems to occur immediately following the catching up (I Thess. 4:17) and changing (I Cor. 15:52-53) of those “which are alive and remain” at the appearing of Christ in heaven.
- II Timothy 4:1—the quick (the living) and the dead are going to judged upon two different occasions: 1) Christ’s appearing, 2) Christ’s kingdom. We observed last Sunday in Revelation

20:4-6 the reality that those who take part in the 1st Resurrection become the priests of God and reign and rule with Christ in his kingdom. This would include: 1) OT Saints, 2) Little Flock, 3) Martyred Tribulation Saints, and those who survived the 70th week and remained faithful.

- The judgment of the JSC for the body of Christ occurs in relation to Christ's appearing to catch up the church just as the judgment of the quick and dead in Israel's program occurs in conjunction with the establishment of God's kingdom on earth according to Old Testament promise and prophecy.
- I Thessalonians 4:17—the JSC of Christ will take place somewhere in the heavenly places after the Rapture of the church. We know from Colossian 3:1-4 and other Pauline scriptures that the future destiny of the body of Christ is heavenly.
- The JSC occurs after the catching up somewhere in the 2nd heaven.