

INTRO: For the last couple weeks we've been talking about eschatological events. That is, those things which will take place at the end of time as we know it. Today, we live in, what is known as, the church age or grace age. The church age started on the day of Pentecost, shortly after the ascension of Christ back to Heaven after His resurrection, and will continue until the the church is taken out of the world. That event of being taken out or "caught up" is what's known as the rapture. Two weeks ago I preached on the pretribulational rapture of the church. Last week we looked at the event that will take place on earth after the church is caught out, the period of time the Word of God calls, the Tribulation. The tribulation will last for 7 years, beginning with the Rapture of the Church and ending at the Revelation of Christ, when Christ returns to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

Today I want us to look at what is happening in Heaven during those same 7 years that tribulation is happening here on earth. There will be two big events that takes place... The Judgement Seat of Christ, and The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Last week we saw...

I) THE TRIBULATION: Matthew 24, Revelation 6

Notice today...

II) THE TRIUMPH: At the rapture of the church, every New Testament Christian, all those who have trusted Christ as their Savior from the time of Pentecost to the rapture, will immediately be with the Lord. We will be carried off into Heaven where we will stand before Christ, the righteous judge, to give an account of ourselves and be rewarded for the things we did while here on earth. This event is called...

The Judgement Seat of Christ: II Corinthians 5: 10 *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*

The Timing of the Judgment Seat of Christ: Luke 14:13-14 *"But when you prepare a banquet, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, for they cannot repay you. You shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

Our Lord stated in v 14, that He would recompense the Just at the time of their resurrection. The Rapture of the Church consists of the resurrection of the Just (those who died in Christ) and the catching up of the Saints (those who are alive and remain). Other verses that point to the Judgment immediately following the rapture are Matthew 16:27, and Revelation 22:12.

The Nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ: The Greek word for "judgment seat" (Bema) refers to a raised platform. It was a place from which speeches were made and where justice was administered. It referred to the official seat of a judge or a speaker's platform. Numerous times in the NT this word is used in this sense:

John 19:13 *"Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha".*

Acts 18:12 *"But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat."*

I) THE TRIBULATION: Matthew 24, Revelation 6

II) THE TRIUMPH: CONTINUED Another meaning of this word refers to the raised platform on which an umpire or referee sat during the ancient Greek Olympic games. It was from this place that winners of various events would receive their rewards.

As was tradition in that day, contestants would appear before the platform of judgment (Bema Seat) at the end of the Olympic games to receive their reward, normally a crown of olive branches. So, the "judgment seat" was not only a place from which justice was administered, it was also a place that rewards were given.

It is probably this meaning of the word that Paul has in mind when he says that all believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It is a place of reward, not punishment. Believers won't stand before God at the Judgment seat to be condemned. They will stand before Him to give an account of their actions, and be rewarded for such.

The Purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ: Salvation is not the issue at the judgment seat of Christ because all who are present at it will be believers. The Bema seat is for the rewarding of believers for their faithfulness in this life...

II Corinthians 5: 10 *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*

The fact that Paul would one day be held accountable for his actions in this life motivated him to please the Lord. He knew that what he did in this life had an impact on eternity.

Likewise, "all" believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. **Why? v 10** *"so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*

The basis for our future judgment as believers is our present actions. God is going to evaluate us in the future on how we live now. Each deed will receive what it deserves.

What is "good" refers to those deeds that were worthwhile, eternal, for the glory of God, what has lasting value. What is "bad" refers to those deeds that were worthless, good for nothing, without any eternal value. God is going to look at the course of our lives and what is worthwhile will last and what is worthless will be lost.

1 Corinthians 3 fills in some of the details surrounding the evaluation of a believer's life at the judgment seat of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3: 10-15 *"According to God's grace that was given to me, I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But each one is to be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, 13 each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. 14 If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved—but only as through fire."*

I) THE TRIBULATION: Matthew 24, Revelation 6

II) THE TRIUMPH: CONTINUED The different building materials represent the believer's works... Two categories of works emerge from this text, either gold, silver, or precious stones OR wood, hay, or stubble.

The works represented by gold, silver, and precious stones refer to those works which are indestructible, done for the glory of God, in the power of God. The works represented by wood, hay, and stubble refer to those works which will be destroyed, and was done for the glory of man, in the power of man.

One day God will test, with the fire of judgment, the quality of materials with which we built on the foundation of Christ. That's the point in **v 13** "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."

Paul says that the works of each believer will be put to the test to evaluate their genuineness. Fire is a symbol for Christ's probing, all-searching judgment that scrutinizes every aspect of our lives. The purpose of this testing fire is to determine that which is destructible and that which is indestructible. God will put all our works to the fiery test and only that which survives the fire will receive reward.

Notice the second event that will take place in Heaven during the 7 years after the rapture...

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb: Revelation 19:7-9 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' " And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

The concept of the marriage supper is better understood in light of the wedding customs in the time of Christ.

The wedding custom had three major parts. **First**, a marriage contract was signed by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom, and the parents of the bridegroom or the bridegroom himself would pay a dowry of gifts and treasure to the bride or her parents. This began what was called the betrothal period—what we would call today the engagement. This period was the one Joseph and Mary were in when she was found to be with child (Matthew 1:18; Luke 2:5).

The **second step** in the process usually occurred a year or so later, when the bridegroom, accompanied by his male friends, went to the house of the bride at midnight, creating a torchlight parade through the streets. The bride would know in advance this was going to take place, and so she would be ready with her maidens, and they would all join the parade and end up at the bridegroom's home. This custom is the basis of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

The **third phase** was the marriage supper itself, which might go on for days, as illustrated by the wedding at Cana of Galilee in John 2:1-2.

I) THE TRIBULATION: Matthew 24, Revelation 6

II) THE TRIUMPH: Revelation 19:7-9

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb: CONTINUED What John's vision in Revelation pictures, is the wedding feast of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and His bride (the Church) in its third phase. The implication is, that the first two phases have already taken place.

The **first phase** is entered into on earth when each individual believer places his or her faith in Christ as Savior. That commitment of Christ to the Believer, and the Believer to Christ, is the contract of Betrothal.

The dowry paid by the Bridegroom's Father was the LIFE of His Son, Jesus Christ. The very life of the Bridegroom Himself. Only God could do such a thing. What a treasure!

And like the wise virgins in the parable, all believers should be watching and waiting for the appearance of the Bridegroom (the rapture). The **second phase** is the rapture of the Church, when Christ comes to claim His bride and take her to the Father's house.

The marriage supper then follows as the **third and final step**. The marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven after the rapture and Judgment Seat of Christ, and before the Revelation of Christ (second coming) and at the same time as the tribulation on earth.

Attending the wedding feast, will be, not only the Church as the Bride of Christ, but others as well. The "others" include the Old Testament saints—they will not have been resurrected yet, but their souls/spirits will be in heaven with us. As the angel told John to write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). The marriage supper will be a glorious celebration of all who are in Christ!

