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JUDGEMENT OF BELIEVERS AND WEDDING SUPER

Jesus will come back for his Church and the dead and those who are alive at his coming, will meet him in the air and then the church will pass through judgement at the Bema seat of Christ.

The concept of the Bema seat comes from the ancient Olympics, where the judge would sit on a bema seat at the finish line. The judge's purpose was to determine who came in first, second and so on, and to give out the appropriate rewards.

The Bema seat does not determine salvation, but is where the believers give an account for their lives.

The Bema seat is only for believers whose salvation has already been secured through faith in Jesus.

The Bema seat is not about judging our sins as much as it is rewarding us according to what we did with our lives for Jesus and His Kingdom, while on earth.

1 Cor 3:12-15

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their 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 person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved – even though only as one escaping through the flames.

One day we will all stand and give an account of what we have done while living here on earth and will be rewarded accordingly.

Here we see that Jesus is our saviour and so salvation is secure, but our works will be judged for their quality and durability, passing through the fire.

Wood, hay and straw can be found anywhere and easily received. Gold, silver and precious stones take hard work, labour and commitment and then refinement to get what is precious.

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God doesn't judge based on success as man sees it, but on the sacrifice to attain it.

God doesn't judge on kingdom outcomes, what we achieved, but kingdom investment, what we did to achieve it.

It would be unfair if God judged each person based on what they produced as often the environments are different, it will be based on what people did to get what they produced.

We see also in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul giving a picture of what will happen at the Bema seat:

2 Cor 5:10

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

At the Bema seat Jesus will bring to light everything that we have done while on earth as a Christian and we will be rewarded accordingly.

Jesus encourages people that their works for the poor and lost will also be rewarded at this time.

Luke 14:13-14

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.'

Paul lived his life the way he did because he didn't want to get to the Bema seat and find he had lived his life in selfishness rather than devotion to Jesus.

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Phil 3:13-14

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, 14 I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

Paul was serving with his eyes and heart focused on the heavenly prize, not any earthly one.

Paul served, working as hard as he could for God so he would hear the words found in Jesus' parable of the talents in Matt 24:21

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

We live and serve for the audience of one, because when we stand before Jesus, no other will be of any importance.

'What we do in life echoes in eternity.' – Maximus (Gladiator)

What will we be judged on?

i. How we have shown mercy to others

James 2:11-13

For he who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a law-breaker. 12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

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James has been speaking about showing preference to rich people over poor people and commands that we show mercy from a correct motive.

ii. Our words

Matt 12:36

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.

Our words reveal our hearts (Matt 12:34) and so Jesus will judge us according to the words we have spoken.

James also confirms this as he mentions that those who teach will be judged more harshly than others.

James 3:1

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

(Why will teachers be judged more strictly?)

Because those who teach can lead many astray and can affect their salvation positively or negatively.)

iii. How we judged others

Matt 7:1-2

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

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God is the only judge and so the way we judge others is the way we will be judged. God is a God of grace and expects us to be gracious with others as he is with us.

vi. How we give

Jesus teaches that when we give away money, we are not losing it from our lives, but investing it into an eternal inheritance.

Matt 6:19-20

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

He also said that at the Resurrection, God would reward them for helping the needy (Luke 14:14). Somehow, we're forever connected to what we give and the people we give it to. Martin Luther has been credited with saying, "I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess." [1]

[1] <https://www.epm.org/resources/2019/Sep/6/giving-eternal-investment>

The wedding super

In Revelation 19 we read about the marriage super of the lamb. This event takes place at the end of the tribulation period.

It can be assumed that once Jesus and His bride have been married that they now come to earth and have the wedding feast. See appendix 4

It is the marriage of Jesus (the lamb) and his bride (the church).

The guests of the wedding are the OT saints, the Gentiles and Jews who were saved in the tribulation period, many who would have been martyred while on earth.

This event will take place after the Bema seat of Christ where the believers are purified and rewarded for what they did while on earth.

The marriage super is between the church, the bride of Christ and the lamb. It was the blood of the lamb that was sacrificed to win the bride and to cleanse her of her sins.

In Rev 19:8 we read 'Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's Holy people.)

This shows that the bride has been to the Bema seat and judged for her works and is now dressed in her righteous acts.

Rev 19:9 also talks about 'blessed are those who are invited to the wedding super of the lamb.'

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'This is not the bride (the church), but the guests. The bride doesn't get invited; she invites. These are those saved before Pentecost, all the faithful believers saved by grace through faith up to the birth of the church (Acts 2:1ff). Though they are not the bride, they still are glorified and reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom. The guests also will include tribulation saints and believers alive in earthly bodies in the kingdom. So, the church is the bride during the presentation feast in heaven, then comes to earth for the celebration of the final meal (during the Millennium). After that event, the new order comes, and the marriage is consummated.'^[1]

There were three distinct stages of a marriage in New Testament times.

i. The engagement

This would have been arranged by both sets of parents and was legally binding and could only be broken by divorce (see Matt 1:19 where Joseph is ready to divorce Mary).

During this time the groom would prepare a house for them both, often next to his father's house. When the house was ready, he would come back for his bride (Jn 14:1-3)

The time was around a year for this, and the bride would wait with her bridesmaids for the shout to go up that the bridegroom was coming to get her.

This meant she had to be ready waiting in expectation and looking for his coming (see Matt 25:1-13) and her bridesmaids would light the way for her, when the best man let them know, he was coming.

^[1] Source unknown

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ii. The ceremony

When the groom was ready, he would come for his wife and she would be carried beautifully dressed to the father's house where gifts were given to her, then the ceremony would take place.

Then they would exchange vows and be blessed and then retire to their new home together to consummate the marriage.

iii. The celebration

The celebration would involve the whole village and would last anything from 3-5 days. (This can also be seen from John 2:1-11).

The wedding supper will take place after the Bema seat judgement of the church and will involve every person of faith from the OT up to those saved in the tribulation period.