The Judgment Seat of Christ is one of the most motivating aspects of Prophecy

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST:  Pp. 53-55 Charting

Dispensationalists distinguish between various judgments in Scripture, while non-dispensationalists generally show fewer distinctions. On the opposite extreme from dispensationalists are the Amillennialists who usually lump all judgments into one final judgment at the return of Christ.

In the dispensational understanding of eschatology, the Judgment Seat of Christ.
1. Occurs after the Rapture and before the marriage supper
2. Concerns only the church.
3. Takes place in heaven while Daniel's 70th week is played out on earth.
4. Does not determine the believer’s salvation, but his reward and position in the millennium and throughout eternity.
5. Is based upon the faithfulness and motive of his service.
6. All that is of true value will be rewarded, all that is not of value will be disqualified
7. Believers may lose their reward but not their salvation

Central Texts Include: 1 Cor 3:9-15; 2 Corinthians 5:5-10;
Good works include witness, worship, and generosity done with the right attitude

Five “crowns” symbols of authority and responsibility are mentioned in Scripture p 55.

Twenty two times “reward” is mentioned in the NT (NASB). Most of those references deal with the future reward of the believer.

Rev 3:11 and 2 John 8 mention the possibility of losing rewards one has already earned.
THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Have you ever been to a Jewish wedding? I have not. But the traditional Jewish wedding consisted of two parts. 1) The betrothal 2) The Wedding ceremony.

1. **Betrothal:** The Bridegroom left his house and came to the house of the women he loved. He made a covenant and paid a price for her that betrothed her to himself- then he returned to His father’s house for a long time – maybe a year to prepare her place of residence. During that time, his betrothed was to remain faithful to him alone and be looking for his return.

2. **Wedding:** On the wedding day, the Bridegroom and his friends made a procession from his house to hers to receive his bride to himself. The bride was richly dressed and adorned for her husband. Then escorted by her companions, the bride was led to her bridegroom’s house for the feast of the Marriage supper; A great week-long feast in the Father’s house, after which the couple would be conducted to the bed chamber for the consummation of their wedding.

   This is the exact figure that Jesus and the Apostles use to describe the relationship of the Lord with his church. He came to us to betroth his church to himself and he paid the bride price on Calvary’s cross with his own blood. Then, having risen from the dead he ascended, returning to the Father’s House waiting for the day of the actual wedding! The wedding will take place when Jesus comes at the Rapture to take all of his church through the ages home to the Father’s house where we will celebrate the marriage supper of the lamb for a whole week of years! (7). Then, united with Christ we will return with Him to rule and reign with Christ in this world after his Second Advent!

   During this period in heaven the church is judged and rewarded at what the NT calls “The Judgment Seat of Christ or God.” Many Christians have missed this vital teaching of the Word of God. Our lifestyles, our choices, our decisions, actions and service are all going to be evaluated by the Lord of glory and then each man’s praise, if any, will come to him from God. Too many have the idea that: “I have my salvation, there is nothing more to be concerned about.” Salvation is free- but rewards must be earned.
When I mention “rewards” as a motivation for Christian service, I suspect you feel just a little embarrassed. It’s like Federal Marshall, John Wayne, in “True Grit” exclaiming about a fugitive they want him to pursue, “Well is there any RE-ward for him?”

What’s in it for me? At first glance it sounds crass, almost mercenary to think of working for God to receive an eternal reward.

But C.S. Lewis wrote in The Weight of Glory, In the New Testament, “we are told to deny ourselves and take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ, and to nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do contains an appeal to desire. There lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and to earnestly hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing. It is selfish, small, self-serving. We are told that it is a kind of covetousness to serve God in order to get a reward. It sounds pious, but C.S. Lewis suggests it is not Christian, but “has crept in from Kant and the stoics.” infinite joy is offered Indeed, if we consider the promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak! We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink, and sex and ambition when us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a vacation at the sea. We are far too easily pleased!

Our problem is that we really don’t believe the astounding promises or else we don’t know what God has really promised us if we will but serve Him faithfully. The Scripture offers no apology for the offers it makes and even highly commends those saints who because they believed in the coming reward endured suffering for Christ. Consider Moses.

Heb 11:24-26

SLIDE: Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (NASB)

This text says Moses gave up a chance perhaps to be Pharaoh of Egypt in the most powerful country of his time in order to gain a reward which could not be taken away. He made a calculated choice and it took
faith! King for a decade or reign with Christ forever? It still takes faith to follow in His footsteps! Faith looks to God as the ultimate rewarder.

SLIDE: Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (NASB)

SLIDE: John Piper agrees, “The great hindrance to worship (service, sacrifice) is not that we are a pleasure-seeking people, but that we are willing to settle for such pitiful pleasures.” John Piper, Desiring God 87.

I. DISTINCTION OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

A. Not a judgment for salvation but an evaluation for reward

Some Bible scholars assume only one final universal judgment. Their view is that all men will be judged by Christ at one time and the saved go to heaven while the lost go to hell. That view is too simplistic. It does not take into account the important distinctions the Bible makes about future judgment. The Word of God distinguishes between the judgment of the unsaved (the lost) and the judgment of the saved.

B. It is distinct from the Great White Throne Judgment

Rev 20:11-15 describes the awful scene called the Great White Throne Judgment. This is the final judgment of all the unsaved of all human history. The Judgment seat of Christ is distinguished from that. When we all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, it will not be to decide who receives salvation. That is decided NOW! That judgment is for believers to determine their eternal reward. Not everyone who goes to heaven will be equal. There are differences in reward. Although there are many references to both judgment and reward for believers I want to focus on 2 Cor 5:10.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

C. Every believer will be judged By Christ & rewards will be handed out.
Paul wrote those words in Corinth where he was once called to appear before the Roman Bema (Judgment seat). In 1994 we stood before that platform which is about 6 feet high. On top the Roman magistrates with the authority of Rome heard the case. It is an intimidating place- but nothing compared with the Bema of Christ.

D. **This is not a judgment to decide your eternal destiny but your eternal reward.**

III. **THE BASIS OF REWARD AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

At issue is: to what extent we pleased the Lord. Your service not your destiny is under investigation. From the time that you and I became believers our life is evaluated as to its value and worth to the kingdom of God. Were we faithful? Did we show faithfulness in spiritual disciplines, in worship, in obedience, in witness, in prayer, in the Word, in service. Did we grow in graces or continue in our vices? Did our heart respond to the grace of God as it should? Were our motives pure? Did we love the Lord? Did we serve Him for the right reasons? Did our life please the Lord? 2 Cor 5:9 “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”

III. **THE NATURE OF THE REWARDS AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

1) Recognition 2) Rule 3) Recompense

These are some of the incomparable rewards to be handed out at the Judgment Seat of Christ. These recognitions will pale all earthly honors as the blinding sun outshines a nightlight. They will infinitely surpass an Emmy, an Oscar, and Dove Awards all at once!

**God Himself is the believers’ great reward as He said to Abraham** Genesis 15:1 “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” To behold the face of God the Son - that will be glory. Yet the Scriptures do not stop there.
A. RECOGNITION FOR SERVICE RENDERED

In the Parable of the Talents Jesus taught that part of the future reward will be recognition and commendation from God. So often down here no one notices what we do. Sometimes we serve without even a “thank you.” Christ notices. At the judgment seat of Christ every believer will receive the recognition that is due him.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is an evaluation of our life and deeds to decide what it was worth to God! God “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. (1 Cor 4:5)

All your life you have been praising God- and he is worthy of every bit and more! On that day- God will praise you! The word “praise” means praise, approval and recognition (A&G). Can you imagine any greater recognition that from the lips of the King of the Universe! Can you imagine any greater honor than to be recognized before all heaven!

To what could we compare the recognition of our Great and Sovereign Lord? To hear from his lips “Well done you good and faithful servant” will be reward enough, will it not!!??

B. RULE & RESPONSIBILITY IN THE COMING KINGDOM

One hallmark of the Christian faith is the conviction that Jesus is coming again to reign. He has already conquered Satan and death but the full effect of that victory awaits His triumphant return. In the very place and sphere where the rebellion occurred the full authority of the reigning monarch must be manifested. All during this interim period we pray- “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Kingdom has not yet arrived in its fullest sense until the Son of Man personally rules and reigns on planet earth. And he will!!

We receive eternal life as a gift of grace purchased by the blood and death of Christ, but to reign with Christ is a reward reserved for the faithful. Some passages seem to imply that all the redeemed will reign.
Revelation 5:10  “And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”  Revelation 22:5 says of his bondservants; and they shall reign forever and ever.

Other passages add conditions. They suggest that reigning with Christ in his coming kingdom depends upon our service and conduct now. The teaching of Jesus is particularly clear on this point.

Luke 19: 15-19  “And it came about that when he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done. “And the first appeared, saying, ‘Master, your mina has made ten minas more.’ “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.’ “And the second came, saying, ‘Your mina, master, has made five minas.’ “And he said to him also, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’

This passage implies that Christ will rule and reign in his kingdom on earth through his faithful proven servants who will be appointed to various posts in that kingdom. The extent of their rule and responsibility appears to relate to their faithfulness to the tasks God gave them in life!

Think about that the next time you are tempted to say “no” to some service for Jesus Christ so you can spend your life on your own enjoyment and the pursuit of happiness down here! If this is true you are making a bad investment. You are frittering away your most valuable asset. You are squandering your most valuable opportunity. You are wasting- instead of investing your time, talent, and treasure for God. No you cannot have your pleasure here and also have it there. You have to choose!

REIGNING WITH CHRIST IS CONDITIONED UPON ENDURING SUFFERING FOR CHRIST NOW.

“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;” (2 Timothy 2:12  NASB)

This is a promise of reward for faithful suffering. Martyred believers from the Great Tribulation “will reign with Christ for a thousand years” all during his earthly kingdom reign! Revelation 20:4-6  Those who reign with Christ are those who have endured persecution, torture and martyrdom because
of their loyalty to Him. They refused the mark of the beast during the tribulation period and so suffered economically. They refused to worship the beast so they suffered beheading at the hands of the government. They were faithful to their testimony for Jesus and to the Word of God even to death- and they will reign.

James calls this reward “the crown of life: James 1:12  *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Only the individual who really loves God can hang in there.

John mentions it in Revelation 2:10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

We are not all called to die for Christ- but we are all destined to suffer in one way or another for Him. You cannot be a faithful Christian who is true to biblical convictions without paying a price. Don’t fool yourself. If you try to blend in and fit into this world you will have to deny Christ.

You will have to remain silent when you ought to speak.

You will have to compromise your convictions and without ever saying the words- you have denied Him!

There is no reward for a traitor- Ask Benedict Arnold! I wouldn’t want to face the Lord having denied Him!

So, REWARDS INVOLVE 1) RECOGNITION  2) RULE

C. RECOMPENSE FOR SACRIFICES MADE

Jesus explained the disciples’ reward:  Then Peter answered and said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; *what then will there be for us?”*  Did Jesus criticize and condemn Peter for asking? NO!
Did Jesus say to Peter, “What a shame to me you are! All you are concerned with is what you will get out of it! Such selfishness will never please me.”

28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life. 30 “But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

Those are staggering promises with their sweep and immensity. Here is the king motivating his disciples with incredible offers- but as the reward is high- so is the price! Is your faith strong enough to believe it?

Many preachers today are drawing their crowds by promising their people the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. Not in the sweet bye and bye but the blessed now and now. The Bible never does that. It takes faith to give up your life, take up your cross and keep on following Jesus! Many start, but to finish well- that brings the reward!

REWARDS ARE SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS CROWNS

The Gk. is stephanos. [The word “Stephanie” is the Feminine form].

A stephanos might denote a crown of royalty (Rev. 6:2, etc.), but its more usual use was for the laurel wreath awarded to the victor at the Games or for a festive garland used on occasions of rejoicing. The Olympic Athletes in the 1st century strove ‘to receive a perishable wreath’ and Paul adds, ‘but we an imperishable’ (1 Cor. 9:25). The winner of the games was treated like a god for a day. He received the honor and glory and acclaim of men. He received the stephanos “the victor’s crown.” Alas it faded in a few days and was worthless. The acclaim died away and he was but a memory. His moment of glory was gone like the dew of dawn. Not so for the Christian!

For the victor in the Christian life there is an imperishable crown. The crown of righteousness. (2 Timothy 4:8) As Paul faced death he wrote
triumphantly, “in the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing.”

Some have suggested that there is a crown of rejoicing for those like Paul who have won and discipled converts in the Lord. Some have called it a soul-winner’s crown. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 Part of the reward of heaven will be the believers in whom you invested. “For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. Heaven will be full of people who can honestly say to you “Thank you for giving to the Lord- I am a life that was changed.” That will be part of the great reward.

For Pastors- and elders who faithfully shepherd the flock of God there is promised the Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:1-4). And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

What do we do with these crowns- wear them proudly for all eternity? I do not know! But I do know that you never want to walk into the Presence of the King empty-handed. Our salvation is all of grace. Nothing in my hand I bring, but simply to the cross I cling. Even rewards are of grace of course. What have we that we have not received? Yet the rewards and recognition will provide us something to cast at the feet of our dear Savior. To lay our life’s service down before Him who is infinitely worthy of all we are and have will be the ultimate privilege of the Judgment Seat of Christ. To receive his well done and then lay it thankfully at His feet because by Him and from Him and to Him are all things!

CONCLUSION: What has God Promised? He has promised glory beyond imagination! His promises are staggering in their immensity.

The consecrated cross I’ll bear till death shall set me free and then go home my crown to wear- for there’s a crown for me Upon that crystal pavement, down at Jesus pierced feet Joyful, I will cast my golden crown and his dear name repeat.

Through eternity- You will never regret what you did for Jesus Christ!