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For We Must All Appear Before the Bema of Christ Second Corinthians 5: 10

For we must all appear before the bema seat of Christ DIG: What is the *bema*? Who is it that appears before Christ? On what basis are the crowns rewarded? When does this take place? Who is the Judge?

REFLECT: Every believer receives at least one crown. Which crown or crowns could you possibly receive? Why? What purpose do these crowns serve? What are you doing with the gifts God has already given you? What will He say to you at the bema?

This is a judgment that will take place in heaven after the Rapture of the Church. **For all believers must all appear before the bema of Christ, that each one may receive what is due them for the things done while in the Body, whether good or bad (Second Corinthians 5:10).** In the synagogue, **the bema** is the raised platform where the Word of God is read and the service is conducted. It is a place of reward; it is a place of honor and blessing. There is no **fear** at **the bema**. **John** spoke of **the bema** when **he** wrote: **In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love (First John 4:17-18).**

The basis of blessing at **the bema** will be the believer's works **done in the Body of Messiah** after salvation. This is illustrated in the parable of the Bags of Gold. Some were faithful and were rewarded, and some were not and lost their reward (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Jx - The Parable of the Bags of Gold**) The believer's sins will not be judged, because they have already been forgiven at the cross, and **there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).** It will not be a question of the believer's sins, but a matter of reward to determine degree of authority in the Messianic Kingdom.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **Your** great love! **You** not only forgive **Your** children, you also*

*put **our sins** immeasurably far away. **As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalms 103:12).** It is all by **Your** grace that anyone enters into **Your** holy heaven. **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves - it is the gift of God. It is not based on deeds, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8, 9).** You have promised rewards for loving service for **Your children (John 1:12, 3:3; First John 3:1, 3).** It is a joy to serve **You!** We love **You!** In the holy name of **Your Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

What will we do with our **crowns** when we receive them? **John** tells us that believers will **lay their crowns before the throne** in heaven and proclaim: **You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being (Rev 4:10b-11).**

Paul gives us a more detailed passage dealing with **the bema**. **By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshua the Messiah.** Rabbi Sha'ul again explains that the basis for judgment is the works of the believer. The **foundation is Jesus Christ**. In addition, their works will not be based on *quantity*, but *quality* instead. **If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light.** The question will not be *how much gold, silver and costly stones or wood, hay or straw*, but *was it gold, silver and costly stones or was it wood, hay and straw?* Thus, some believers will find their works burned up, while others will merely find them refined. **It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.**

Forgiveness does not exclude accountability. It's just burning away the dross to purify the real stuff that is to be rewarded. Finally, the rewards are given. Those who have built with **gold, silver and costly stones** will find their works still remaining, but purified after the fire has been applied. **If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward (First Corinthians 3:10-14).**

But if they have built with **wood, hay and straw**, they will be burned **up**. Therefore, **he will suffer loss**, in the sense of lost rewards and authority in the Millennium, nothing more. Lest anyone think that **he** lost **his** salvation, Rabbi Sha'ul says in no uncertain terms that **he himself will be saved. His** works do not determine salvation. **His** eternal relationship with **the Lord** is guaranteed because **He has anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (Second Corinthians 1:21-22).** Salvation equals faith . . . plus nothing. But **he** will spend a

thousand years in the Messianic Kingdom **as one escaping through the flames** with nothing to show for his spiritual life (**First Corinthians 3:15**).



This passage says nothing about the nature of the reward; however, other passages do. They speak of these rewards as being crowns. The Greek language has two words meaning **crown**. The first word is *diadem*, which is a king's **crown**. It is the **crown** of sovereignty and of a person who is royal by his nature and by his position - a king. This is the kind of **crown** that **Jesus** wears. The second Greek word is *stephanos*, which is a **crown** given to an overcomer, a victor, one who has won a race. These are the kinds of **crowns** available to believers because they overcame in the spiritual warfare with Satan and are now **crowned** at the *bema* seat of Christ. **There are five such crowns mentioned in the Bible.**¹⁵⁰

The first is called the incorruptible crown: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever (**First Corinthians 9:24-25**). This **crown** is given to believers who faithfully run the race, believers who crucify every selfish desire in the flesh and point people to **Christ**. God calls some people to do things that will require some sacrifice in the way they live and conduct their lives. This verse also implies that these people will receive this **crown** for the sacrifices they were willing to make for **ADONAI** in order to successfully complete the call or mission God called them to do. They were faithful to that call.

The second crown is called the crown of rejoicing: For what is our hope, our joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming? For you are our glory and joy (**First Thessalonians 2:19-20**). Paul asked rhetorically, what would be the greatest blessing he could possibly receive at the *bema* seat of Christ. The **Thessalonians** were! They were everything that was worth anything to **Messiah**. They were **His hope, crown, glory and joy**. In essence, Paul said, "When life is over and we stand in the presence of our **Lord Jesus** at **His** Second Coming,

you **Thessalonians** will be **His** source of **glory and joy**, you mean that much to **Him**." This is the soul winner's crown. It is not hard to understand **God's** eagerness to reward those who bring the lost to **Him**. Some have the gift of evangelism, but we are all to evangelize. We need to understand that a relationship with **Jesus** is exactly what unbelievers are searching for, whether they realize it or not, and reaching out to them causes **God** to rejoice.

The third crown is the crown of righteousness: Now there is in store 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 longed for His appearing (Second Timothy 4:7-8). Rabbi Sha'ul had stored up spiritual currency in heaven, and so can we. **Jesus Himself** said: **Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal it** (Matthew 6:20). **Yeshua** tells us that there isn't anything that you have suffered in this life that that will not be rewarded **at least a hundred times as much** (Mark 10:29-30). This **crown of righteousness** describes itself. It is **the crown** of eternal **righteousness** - the very **righteousness** of the **Redeemer** granted in full perfection to the glorified believer. When we receive our glorified bodies, we will receive this **crown**. All believers will be rewarded.

The fourth crown is called the crown of life: In **James**, it is a crown for those people who remain faithful to the Gospel even under persecution: **Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him** (James 1:12). And in the book of **Revelation**, it is given to those who suffer martyrdom for their faith. **Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death** (Revelation 2:10-11).

The fifth and final crown mentioned in the Bible is the crown of glory: To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. There are **glorious** days coming when those who serve **Yeshua** with the right heart and in the right way will be rewarded. **Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And then Peter makes an application: When the Shepherd**

appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away (First Peter 5:2-4). This is a **crown** for faithfully feeding the flock of **ADONAI**. It is available to those pastors, messianic rabbis, elders and other teachers who feed **the sheep** with the milk and meat of the Word of **God**.

There may be other **crowns** available, but these are the only ones referred to in the Bible. At least these five are available to those whose works remain, which are built of **gold, silver and precious stones**. These **crowns** are for the purpose of determining degree of authority in the Messianic Kingdom and not for the Eternal State. In eternity, all believers will be equal, but not so in the Millennial Kingdom where believers will have different positions of authority (**Luke 19:11-27**).¹⁵¹

However, only believers will receive these **crowns**. Before we leave this section, it might be good to ask yourself, "Have I accepted **Yeshua Messiah** as my **Lord** and **Savior**?" You are headed for one of two destinies - heaven or hell - and only those who belong to the family of **God** can enter heaven.

If I asked you if you were a sinner, what would you say? **Romans 3:23** says: **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**. That includes you and me, doesn't it? Most people feel that being good gets you into heaven and being bad keeps you out. That simply is not true; **we all have sinned**. What would you say sin is? I think we can agree that we are both sinners; now let's define **sin**. Some have said, "I'm not perfect," or "I have made some mistakes." But what do you think the Bible means by sin? Well, the Bible says that **everyone practicing sin breaks God's law - indeed, sin is lawlessness (First John 3:4)**. Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Have you ever misused the name of **God**? Have you ever told a lie? This is what **sin** is. It's breaking **God's law**. And any time you break **a law** there is a penalty. If you run a stop sign, the penalty is a fine. If you rob a bank, the penalty is jail. What is the penalty for breaking **God's law**?

The Bible teaches us that **the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a)**. **The wages** of work is money, but the wages of sin is death. In other words, what I earn - the penalty, the punishment of **sin - is death**. **Death** is separation. The Bible speaks of two kinds of **death** that is two kinds of separation. The first **death** is separation of the body and the soul. If I were to die right now my body would fall to the floor, but my soul, the real me, would go somewhere else. But the Bible speaks of another **death**, one it calls **the second death**. This is separation of the soul from **God**. Now, the penalty of sin is death, spiritual death, and separation from **the LORD**. To put it simply - hell. All this is really bad news. But there is good news.

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). We were spiritually dead and unable to make the first move toward **God** because we inherited Adam's **sin** nature that rebelled and separated us from **Him**. So, **God** made the first move toward us by sending **His** one and only **Son** to die in our place for the payment for our **sins**. We stand before **the Son of God**, guilty of **sin**, and facing a death penalty. But **Yeshua**, as **judge (John 5:27)**, comes down from behind the seat of judgment, takes off **His** judicial robe and stands beside us. It is there that **He** says to us, "I will take your place. I will die for you." And if you were the only person in the world, **He** still would have died for you. The penalty for **sin** is death, but **Messiah** died and paid for **sin** so we do not have to go to hell.

It is not what you do for **God** that saves you, it is what **God** has already done for you. You don't get to heaven by what you do; you get to heaven by what you **believe**.

What is it that I need to **believe** in, to **trust** in, to have **faith** in, to be saved?

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16 and First Corinthians 15:3b-4). If you **believe** this, you are saved.

Nothing else matters.

Salvation = faith + nothing (not baptism, not good works, nothing means nothing).

Without

faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that

He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Now is the day of salvation (Hebrews 11:6 and Second Corinthians 6:2c).

Would you like to be saved right now?

Pray this simple prayer in **faith**. But before you do, I want you to remember that saying a prayer does not save you, **trusting in Jesus Christ** does. **God, I admit that I have sinned. I believe Yeshua Messiah died for my sins and I want to trust Him to save me right now. Lord, please come into my heart and make me a new person. I accept your gift of salvation.**

If you were to die right now, where would you go?



Why should **God** let you into **His** heaven?

That's right, because **Yeshua** died to pay for your **sins**.

If you prayed that prayer in **faith** see my commentary on **The Life of Christ [Bw](#) - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith.**