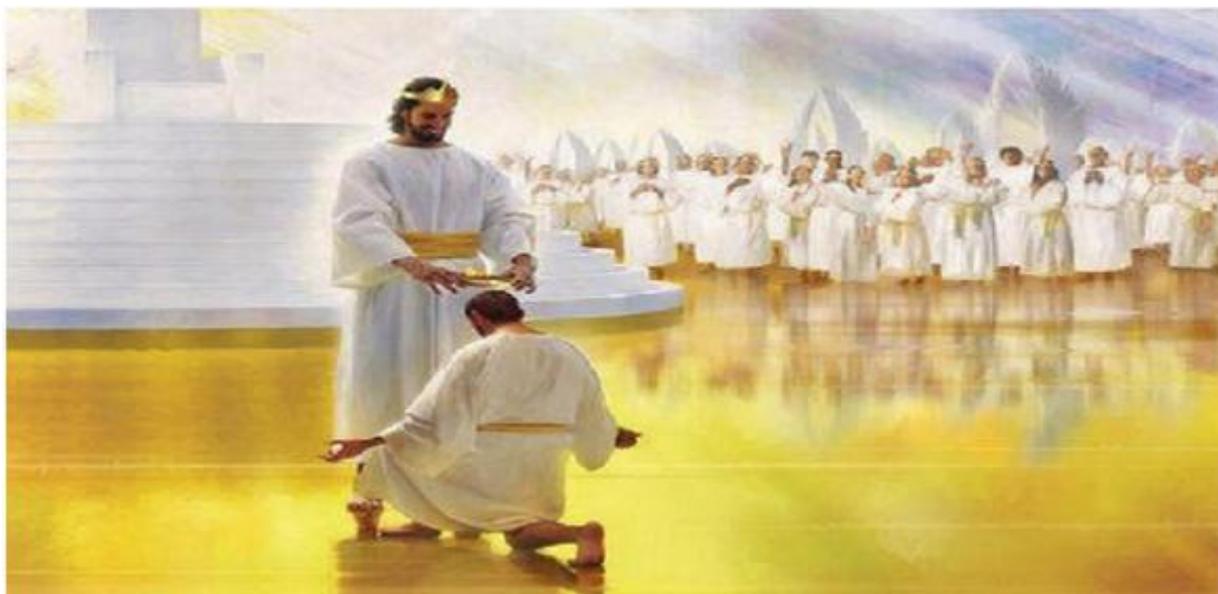


# Ministry of Grace Church

## Romans 14:8-12 – The Judgment Seat of Christ Sermon Notes



### Introduction

In this section of Scripture, we read about the Judgment Seat of Christ. So, what is this Judgment Seat and what happens there. In the coming minutes we will explore a little bit about this Judgment Seat and who and/or what will be judged there. It is my hope that by the end of this message we will not only be more informed about this judgment, but also more motivated to serve God for the building up of His church.

What we learn here could have a huge impact on our eternity!

### Romans 14:8-12

**for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you view your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.**

We have intentionally included verse 8 with these verses so that we can see how this section ties in with the previous section. Here we learn that Jesus Christ died so that He might be our Lord whether we are still living or have already died. In other words, Jesus is our Lord both in this life and in death. And, as our Lord, our Master, our Owner, only He has the

right to judge us and all other Christians. We don't have that right, only He does. This is the primary reason that we are not supposed to be judgmental about other Christians.

And – not only does Jesus have the **right** to judge us, He **will** judge us because, according to Paul, all Christians will stand before His judgment seat. The word translated “**judgment seat**” is the Greek word *Bematos*, which refers to, “an elevated step often with a seat upon it where a judgment or tribunal is held.” In the athletic games of the 1st century, a *Bematos* was where the victor in a race or other contest was awarded a crown (*stephanos*, meaning “victor’s crown”) by the judge who sat on the Judgment Seat. This *Bematos* was used as the place to hand out awards. Let me say that again, the *Bematos* was used as the place to hand out awards.

Many people will recognize Paul’s next quotation as coming from Isaiah,

I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance.*”

If you read the context of this quotation from Isaiah, you will see that Isaiah was referring to Yahweh as the one to whom every knee will bow. But - this verse by Isaiah is also quoted by Paul in his letter to the Philippeans,

so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father. (*Philippians 2:10-11*)

Here, Paul says that Jesus is the one to whom every knee will bow. Therefore, Paul is proclaiming that Jesus Christ IS Yahweh. And - Paul makes it very clear in his letter to the Philippians that it is not just Christians who will bow before God, but every person who ever lived or who will ever live.

Jesus Christ, the second person of the godhead, has always been Lord over all created beings. Jesus Christ is Lord of all—those who are alive physically as well as those who are dead physically, and He is Lord of those who are alive spiritually as well as those who are dead spiritually. He is Lord of all!

Now, let’s talk about this Judgment Seat of Christ for a few minutes. There are three judgments spoken of in the New Testament. They are: The Judgment Seat of Christ for all New Testament believers (Christians), the Sheep and Goat Judgment (*Matthew 25:31-46*) for all believing Jews and all people who live during the Tribulation, and The Great White Throne Judgment (*Revelation 20:11-15*) for all non-believers of all time. At The Judgment Seat of Christ, God will judge the works of all Christians, Jew or Gentile. Those who are judged will be given rewards, in the form of crowns, for the works they have done while on this earth.

Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to

be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2Corinthians 5:5-10)

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul said this about the work we are currently doing to build up the church, the body of Christ.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident, for the day will indicate it because it is revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1Corinthians 3:12-15)

So, we can see from these two passages that it is the works of Christians, and Christians only, that will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Why do I say that it is only Christians who will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ? Notice that it says that those who appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ have been given the Spirit as a pledge. Only Christians have been given the Spirit as a pledge of their salvation. At the Judgment Seat of Christ our works will be judged, and we will receive rewards for the works which have been done for Him. Works done to build up the body of Christ, the church. The works which we have done for ourselves will be burned up. According to 1Corinthians 3:13, the fire will "test" the quality of our works. The word, test, is translated from the Greek word *dokimadzo*, which means "testing or proving a thing to find its worth or goodness." Therefore, again, the Judgment Seat of Christ is for the purpose of finding good so that rewards can be given, *not* for the purpose of finding bad to be punished. Also notice that as the fire "tests" our works, those which are worthless will be burned up. There is no penalty or punishment, simply a loss of what was done because it is worthless in God's eyes.

And - what Paul has to say regarding our appearance before the Judgment Seat of Christ is that "each one of us will give an account of himself to God." That is, when we appear before Christ's judgment seat, we will have to give an explanation of what we have done for Him. We will not be called upon to give witness testimony about anyone else's actions, only our own. Therefore, since God's focus at the judgment seat of Christ will be on our works done for His glory, our focus in this earthly life needs to be on what we are doing for God, not on what other Christians are or aren't doing.

Also, notice very carefully that this is a judgment of our works, not our sins. According to 2Corinthians 5:10 this judgment will be "according to what each person has done." Our sins, on the other hand, have already been judged. They were judged at the cross when Christ paid the penalty for all our sins with His blood. When we believed God's promise, like Abraham, we were declared righteous. All of our sins – past, present, and future – were judged and paid for; Therefore, they cannot be the subject of the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, when will the Judgment Seat of Christ occur? The exact time of this judgment is difficult to pin down. Based on the passage above from **2Corinthians 5** it is clear that the Bema Seat Judgment happens after the rapture. At the rapture all Christians will receive their glorified bodies, and it is most likely that at that time the Bema Seat Judgment will take place, because according to **1Thessalonians 4:17**, from that moment on we will forever be with the Lord. Also, in the following:

For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting? Is it not even you, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. (**1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**)

Paul makes a reference to the crown of boasting at the time of Christ's returning for the Church. This seems to indicate that the crowns will be given as part of the events of the rapture. Then - in **1Thessalonians 3:13** we see Christ bringing his redeemed ones to The Father and we (the redeemed ones) have blameless hearts.

Now, let's look at this verse a little more closely.

so that He may strengthen your hearts blameless in holiness, before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. (**1Thessalonians 3:13**)

Some commentators see this as a description of the second coming of our Lord. But if you compare this with Revelation chapter 19 where the second coming is described you will see some things that don't quite match.

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; having a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself, and being clothed with a garment dipped in blood, His name is also called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the wrath of the rage of God, the Almighty. And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." (**Revelation 19:11-16**)

In the 1Thessalonians passage, Jesus is said to be coming with all His saints. However, in the Revelation 19 passage, it says that the "armies which are in heaven are said to be following Him. Also, in the New Testament, angelic beings are never referred to as "saints." But the biggest difference between these two descriptions of the "coming" of our Lord is that in Revelation He is clearly coming to the earth where the Battle of Armageddon is about to unfold. However, in the 1Thessalonians passage it says that He is coming before our God and Father. Let's look at that passage again.

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you, and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you, so that He may strengthen your hearts blameless in holiness, before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. (**1 Thessalonians 3:11-13**)

Where is this event occurring? "... before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." This is not occurring at Armageddon. This is a description of Jesus bringing His bride and presenting her to His Father.

Now, at the risk of distracting from Paul's message here in Romans 14, let's talk about Jesus coming at the Rapture. Where is He coming from? We are told in **1 Thessalonians 4:15-16**,

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (**1 Thessalonians 4:15-16**)

Jesus is coming from heaven. And, since He will first resurrect the "dead in Christ," He must be bringing them with Him. So where have they been? Do you remember the thief on the cross?

What did Jesus tell the thief on the cross? We read about it in Luke's gospel. Here we see both of those who were being crucified with Jesus,

And one of the criminals hanging there was blaspheming Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (**Luke 23:39-43**)

The second criminal realized that he, himself, was guilty but Jesus was innocent. And he then asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom. He believed that Jesus was the coming Messiah, the Christ. This second criminal was saved! And, what did Jesus say? "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise. At the time, Paradise was in Sheol, but that's not where it is today. According to the Apostle Paul:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. (**2 Corinthians 12:2-4**)

Paul says that he was caught up "to" the third heaven (God's throne room). The word translated "to" is *heos*, which means "as far as" or "up to but not into." But Paul also says that he was caught up "into" Paradise. The word translated "into" is *eis*, meaning "from the outside of something to the inside of that thing." Do you see that? Paul says that he was caught up to the third heaven, but he was taken *into* Paradise. That means that Paradise is just underneath God's throne room.

How did Paradise get moved from Sheol (in the center of the earth) up to just beneath the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven? I think **Ephesians 4:8** gives us that answer. It says,

Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.” (Ephesians 4:8)

This is quoted from the Psalms,

You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, ... (Psalms 68:18)

You see, when Jesus rose from the dead, He took Paradise with Him including all those who already believed that He was the Christ, the Messiah. When He comes back at the Rapture, He will stop off at Paradise and collect all the New Testament believers (Christians) and bring them with Him. They will be united with their resurrected bodies and then we will be “caught-up” with them. Then – based on what we have just learned, we will appear before the Bema Seat, where we will receive our crowns and then we will be presented before the Father.

But that’s not the end! When we read Revelation chapter four, we see God, the Father, sitting on His throne and He is surrounded by 24 other thrones. Sitting on these 24 thrones are 24 “elders” who are clothed with white garments, and golden crowns are on their heads. These crowns are “*stephanos*” crowns, victor’s crowns. I wonder where those came from. The only place in the Bible where anyone is given a victor’s crown is at the Judgment Seat of Christ. These 24 elders are the church (you and me) where we will watch what is going on down on the earth during the Tribulation! Is that exciting or what!

### **So What?**

After death, those who have rejected Christ will learn, to their horror, that they have rejected God Himself. Their eternal fate will have been sealed with no chance to change their mind. For those of us who have believed in His death and resurrection, we know Him as Lord right now. But – and this is of utmost importance to us right now, we also have a choice to live as if Jesus Christ is our Lord. After death we will completely know His lordship over us. Are you living now as if He is your Lord, or is He just your Savior?

We should not be judging the things that our brothers and sisters in Christ are doing. Instead, we should be focusing on doing works of righteousness that will bring glory to God, which He will judge and for which He will reward us. Are you performing works that are worthy of reward from your Lord? Or are you too busy being critical of your brother or sister in Christ? We are not the judge, He is!

Let us all judge our own actions, not the actions of other Christians, so that He will judge them worthy on that day! We would all rather receive heavenly crowns than the smell of smoke.

Let’s pray