THE PROPHECY SERIES **COUNTDOWN**

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST AND THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Session Five / Wednesday, February 14, 2007

- No teaching in the New Testament has ever impacted me more than that of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

"....WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST...."

– PAUL

> ***"If we were to examine the life of the Apostle Paul, we would find that the controlling factor in his daily experience was his anticipation and expectation of meeting the Lord Jesus at this judgment seat. Every step the apostle took, every act he performed, every ministry he carried on, he did anticipating a day of reckoning at the Judgment Seat of Christ."***
> Dr. D. D. Pentecost / Prophecy for Today / Zondervan / page 150

In Paul's own words:

<u>1 Cor. 3:9-15</u>

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. [10] According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. [11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; [13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. [14] If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

2 Cor. 5:9-10

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Note: The "we" Paul speaks to here are BELIEVERS, not unbelievers. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST WILL BE FOR CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS, THE BORN-AGAIN. It is NOT a judgment to determine whether a person is saved or lost; it is rather an AUDIT of the believer's life since salvation. This judgment is not punishment for sins committed after salvation.

Both the Old and New Testaments remind us that the believer's sins are covered by the blood - the blood of animal sacrifices in the Old Testament and the blood of Jesus in the New Testament; so: Jeremiah 31:34: "for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Hebrews 8:12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST WILL BE TO DETERMINE THE ETERNAL REWARDS THE BELIEVER WILL HAVE.....FOR REWARDS ARE NOT AUTOMATIC WITH SALVATION.

- There is no one who has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior who will be exempted from this examination.

T H E B E M A

"The original language of the apostle's statement in 2 Corinthians 5 says, 'We must all stand before the BEMA of Christ.' The word 'bema' was one that would be familiar to these Corinthians, for just outside the city of Corinth was a large Olympic stadium where the athletes from all over Greece would assemble periodically to contest in the Greek Olympic games. It was the custom that while a contest was being run, the judges would watch carefully to make sure that every rule of the contest was observed. The victor in a given contest, if he had participated lawfully, would be led by the judges to the bema. There one of the honored citizens would take an oak leaf cluster or a laurel wreath and place it as a chaplet upon his forehead or as a garland upon his shoulders. Paul says that every believer would one day stand before God's BEMA."
Pentecost / Prophecy For Today page 154

Paul sums it up with this terse line: "....so that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

VIDEO OF PASTOR BETZER'S TEACHING AT THE ACTUAL BEMA IN CORINTH, GREECE

1. Everything we do in the Name of Christ's work on this earth, following our salvation, can be categorized:

- Hay
- Wood
- Stubble
- **Gold**
- **Silver**
- **Precious Stones**

The highlighted categories represent those things we have done to honor Christ and for which we want HIM to receive ALL the glory and honor.

The other three, hay, wood and stubble, are those things we have done in God's work that we have done for our own benefit, satisfaction or glory.

2. We are going to THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB. In Jesus' culture 2,000 years ago, the wedding was all for the man. Today's weddings are pretty much to feature the bride. So for us to have an understanding of THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB, we need to understand that ***we will not be allowed to bring anything into that grand event that draws anyone's attention to ourselves....only those things that lift people's eyes to Jesus, the STAR event.***

So to make sure that we are not improperly attired (or are carrying with us anything detrimental to Christ's honor), we are REQUIRED to stop first at THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, where our "hope chest" will be opened and its contents tested by **fire**.

If all our work on earth (allegedly done for Christ) is hay, wood and stubble, the fire will consume it. **1 Cor. 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.**

Illustration: Every Christian is commanded in Scripture to tithe. Why do you tithe? For a tax deduction? (Hay, wood and stubble) Or to honor Christ by your obedience to His command? (Gold, silver, precious stones).

Here is a great truth from Dr. Pentecost's text:

"If I were to place a block of gold and a block of wood side by side, anyone could tell from looking at them which is which. Why does God apply the judgment of His holiness to determine what is destructible and what is indestructible? May I remind you that God is not going to judge by an external judgment; God is not going to judge by appearance; God is not going to look at a thing externally and say, 'That LOOKS pretty to me so I will accept it.' God is going to test the works to reveal their essential character, to see whether it is gold or whether it is wood; whether it is silver or whether it is clay; whether it is precious stones or whether it is stubble. An individual may have a great deal in the way of works to put before the Lord. The Lord will look at them in judgment, and they may be consumed away in a moment of time so that nothing is left. The man stands there naked and shame-faced and dumb because all that he thought he had to offer the Lord as a thank offering has been consumed away. He shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire." Prophecy for Today / pages 156-157

3. <u>What constitutes gold, silver and costly stones and what constitutes wood, hay and stubble?</u>

- Two Sunday School teachers: One teaches out of a heart prompted by the Spirit of God, is faithful before the Lord in preparation, and teaches not for his or her own pleasure nor to satisfy someone who has asked him or her to teach and not to gain reputation for being a good teacher. No, this person teaches faithfully for the glory of God! On the other hand, the second is a teacher who likes prominence, likes to be influential, wants to be respected for having an interest in spiritual things. THEY BOTH HAVE DONE THE SAME THING, BUT AT THE BEMA OF CHRIST GOD IS GOING TO BE THE ONE TO SAY TO THE ONE: "THAT IS ACCEPTABLE TO ME BECAUSE IT BROUGHT GLORY TO ME." AND TO THE OTHER HE WILL SAY, "THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE TO ME BECAUSE IT BROUGHT GLORY TO YOU AND I GOT NO GLORY OUT OF IT WHATSOEVER."

- You may not be a preacher or teacher. You are a housewife, or an accountant, or a carpenter or a policewoman or whatever. Whatever God's purpose is for your life, if you pursue it to bring Him honor by your life, even if it's in an unseen and unrecognized place, yet you served in obedience to God and for His glory, when you stand before God, the heavens will radiate with the joy and triumph that came from your service.

- BOTTOM LINE: IT IS NOT "WHAT" BUT "WHY" YOU SERVED HIM.

WHAT ARE THE REWARDS GOING TO BE?

1. Scripture uses the term or figure of "crowns." Don't think of a jewel-encrusted gold "hat" here. To the Corinthians, a "crown" would have meant a garland or wreath won in a sporting contest.

2. Whatever "reward" we might gain, that reward itself will not be for us but to bring honor to Christ:

Rev. 4:10-11

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, [11] Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

We will take whatever honors we have been given - that which has survived the fire by which they have been tested by God - and we will lay them at the feet of Jesus. **CAN YOU EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE THE SHAME OF HAVING NOTHING TO LAY AT HIS FEET BUT ASHES?**

"Upon the crystal pavement down at Jesus' pierced feet,
Joyful I'll cast my golden crown and His dear name repeat."

Crowns are not given us for our possession, but to be placed before the Lord as a thank offering.

Dr. Pentecost: *"The thing that is of the deepest concern to me every day that I live is that when I see Him face to face and stand before Him in judgment, the fruits of my life will be found acceptable to Him, so that I can have something to put before Him as a thank offering for all that He has done for me."* Prophecy for Today / pages 159-1600

3. What a time of rejoicing that will be. As Daniel described it: **Daniel 12:3**

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Illustration: You perhaps have gone into some fine home or public hall where they had a beautiful crystal chandelier. When it was lit up the whole chandelier sparkled with beautiful radiance. If you were to examine that chandelier you would find that it was made up of a number of small bulbs; there might be some 25 watt, some 50 watt, some 100 watt, perchance some 500 watt bulbs. Each one had a different capacity but each one was shining to the limit of its capacity. That chandelier was beautiful because of the total capacity of all that was within it. In eternity, some of us are going to shine to the glory of God with a 25 watt capacity, and some with a 50 watt capacity, perhaps even some with a 500 watt capacity. All will contribute to the glory of God according to the capacity that has been given to us at the BEMA of Christ. We will not be jealous of those with 500 watt strength because none of this was for our glory in the first place. But with all that was within us we radiated the glory of Christ by our lives.

4. FAITHFULNESS is the issue here. **1 Cor. 4:2**
Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Rev. 19:7-10
Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. [8] And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. [9] And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. [10] And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

If you attempt to understand the scriptural teaching of the Marriage of the Lamb with our "westernized" concepts of weddings, we will miss the main points. We need to understand how weddings were conducted in Jesus' day.

There were three separate stages to weddings in the Middle East.

- THE BETROTHAL (ENGAGEMENT)

1. It would have been very unusual for a marriage to happen because of "young love." Most often, marriages took place long after a contract had been drawn up between the

father of a boy and the father of a girl. Such contracts even took place, on occasion, before the children were born.

2. This contract was BINDING and could broken only by a divorce.

This is why Mary's announcement to Joseph that she was pregnant (before they had ever consummated a marriage**)** was so shaking to him. They were engaged. He could not just "call it off." His options were limited: have Mary stoned to death for adultery or fornication or divorce her - "put her away privately" as the Bible puts it.

3. The follower of Christ is engaged or betrothed to Christ. **2 Cor. 11:2** **For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

We are to be faithful to our "betrothed." **Ephesians 1:3** **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:**

If you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior, you are betrothed to Him. Just as any groom would expect His bride to keep herself clean and pure for himself, so Jesus expects that from us, His bride.

Ephes. 5:25-29
Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; [26] That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, [27] That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. [28] So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. [29] For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

- **THE PRESENTATION**

1. After arriving at a proper age (depending upon that culture), the father would say to his son, "Time now for the engagement to be fulfilled in marriage." The father would then send his emissaries to the bride's house who would present a copy of the marriage contract to her father. Then there would be a procession to the groom's father's house and the ceremony that followed was called "the presentation." The father of the bride would take his daughter's hand and place it in the hand of the father of the groom, indicating the fulfillment of the contract. At that point, the bride and groom were married.

Matthew 22:1-3

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, [2] The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, [3] And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding:

- **THE MARRIAGE BANQUET OR RECEPTION**

1. At this point the bride had moved away from her father's house to be with her new husband. At the reception, the groom had gathered his friends so he might introduce them to his bride.

Rev. 19:7

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Over the years I have conducted countless weddings. I don't recall ever seeing a bride come down the aisle unprepared. "She has made herself ready."

Dr. Pentecost: *Can you imagine anything more tragic than for a bride to carefully prepare a complete and attractive trousseau in a hope chest and to open it up on the day of her wedding and find that the moths had been in it? Or that a mouse has started at the bottom and gnawed all the way to the top?*

My friend, Christ could catch His bride away at any moment. We must have "our garments" ready.

THE HONEYMOON

1. In Revelation we read the whole scenario:

Rev. 19:7-16

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. [8] And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. [9] And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. [10] And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. **[11] And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in**

righteousness he doth judge and make war. [12] His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. [13] And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. [14] And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. [15] And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. [16] And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

We, the bride of Christ, return with Him to this earth to rule and reign for 1,000 years. This is the millennium.

A rich man in former eras might have been wealthy enough to throw a feast for his new daughter-in-law for perhaps a week. God will throw a feast for His Son's bride, the Church for a thousand years.

The bride eyes not her garment
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory
But on my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand.
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.