

Series: "The Crowns"

"BEMA!"

II Corinthians 5:1-10

December 30, 2007

Pastor Corey Sateren

Happy New Year!

I am always excited when the New Year comes in! To me it is just the right time to set new goals, to get a new lease on life, or to just leave the past behind and start all over afresh!

Personally, I take advantage of this time of year! I know for myself – and the more I talk with you I find this is true in many of your lives as well – one of the key personal areas that I reflect on and re-gear on at this time of year is in the area of my time with God (my personal Bible reading and study time). I ask questions like -

- Did I accomplish my reading goals like I wanted to?
- Did I study like I wanted to?
- Did I listen to the CD's like I wanted to?
- What reading or study goals do I want to set for this year?

I certainly don't want to embarrass anyone today, but do you mind if I ask you, "*How many of you find yourself reflecting and re-gearing and asking these same types of questions in regards to your Bible reading and study time as you go into the New Year?*" Yah, I thought so.

As we do every year we have printed up for anyone who desires to participate the "[Read Through The Bible In A Year](#)" reading guide. (Show)

I also know to some the turning the pages into the New Year may be depressing and discouraging. Even though I'll be getting one year older again this year...I can deal with it! (Don't laugh; you'll be getting one year older too!)

- Today - Deb Kabat

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we're kids? If you're less than 10 years old, you're so excited about aging that you think in fractions. Did you ever notice?

"How old are you?" "I'm four and a half!"

You're never thirty-six and a half. You're four and a half, going on five! That's the key.

You get into your teens...now they can't hold you back! You jump to the next number...or even a few ahead.

"How old are you?" "I'm gonna be 16!"

They could be 13, but hey, you're gonna be 16! That's how that works!

And then the greatest day of your life is when you become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony:

YOU BECOME 21. YESSSS!!!

But then you TURN 30. Oooohh what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk. He TURNED 30; we had to throw him out. There's no fun now. What's wrong? What's changed? Did you see the pattern?

SLIDE –

You BECOME 21

You TURN 30

Then you're PUSHING 40.

Whoa! Put on the brakes! It's all slipping away!

Before you know it...

SLIDE –

You REACH 50

And your dreams are gone.

But wait!!!

SLIDE –

You MAKE IT to 60.

You didn't think you would! Did you?

So you BECOME 21, TURN 30, PUSH 40, REACH 50 and MAKE IT to 60.

By this time you have built up so much speed that...

SLIDE –

You HIT 70!

After that it's a day-by-day thing; you HIT Wednesday; you HIT...!

By the time your 80 we say...

SLIDE –

You **GET INTO** your 80's

And really by now every day is a complete cycle:

You **HIT** lunch; you **TURN** 4:30; you **REACH** bedtime.

And it doesn't end there...when the 90's come around you start going backwards...

SLIDE –

"I Was **JUST** 92."

Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again.

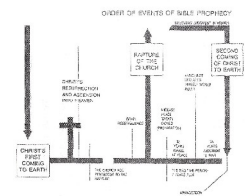
SLIDE –

"I'm 100 and a half!"

What a cycle! And as we grow older our bodies feel it...don't they?

Awe...this getting old business is for the birds! But, one day we will be with our Lord and Savior and have fresh, vibrant, and new bodies! And if you believe in the order of Prophecy similar to what I believe then you believe that you will get your new bodies at **THE RAPTURE!** And that this could actually happen at any time now! Let me show you...

SLIDE – End Times Sequence



What I would like to focus on for the next few weeks is this...

SLIDE – Same Event...Different Name

- “Believers Judgment in Heaven” (Referred to by diff names)
- “The Judgment Seat of Christ”
- “The ‘Bema Seat’ Judgment”.

You will hear me refer to it by all three names throughout our mini-series.

In fact, I’m entitling this series...

SLIDE – THE CROWNS

...because we are going to find out when we are raptured and get to heaven and are participating in this “Believers Judgment” that it is actually like an “Awards Ceremony” where we who have ‘run the race’ on earth receive our awards/rewards for doing so and the Scriptures refer to our awards/rewards as ‘crowns’! Now, we’ll come back to those crowns, but first...

SLIDE – Pew Bible Pg. 1052

Take your Bibles, please and open them to the New Testament book of John 3. If you didn’t bring your Bible with you today I would encourage you to reach forward and grab that burgundy colored Bible and turn to page 1052. (1st Service – Video Café – Raise hands for a Bible and someone will come by and hand you one! Keep it up!)

Sadly, when the idea of “The Judgment Seat of Christ” comes up and people see themselves facing Jesus, many are filled more with dread than encouragement. We picture ourselves before an immense, compassionless throne, shaking and trembling in our guilt and imperfections while God replays a video of our lives and points out every flaw and failure and mistake and bad decision and dark thought that we have ever made or had.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not like that at all! IN FACT...

Well, let’s look at...

SLIDE –Some Quick FACTS (on the Judgment Seat of Christ)

1. It is for believers only

There will be NO UN-believers at this judgment. They will have their own time of judgment that comes at a later time and a different judgment called “The Great White Throne Judgment” which will follow the Millennial Reign of Christ in Revelation 20.

THIS judgment (Judgment Seat of Christ) recall happens immediately following the RAPTURE of our bodies and we are in heaven with Christ and our new bodies.

SLIDE –

2. It does not determine our entrance into heaven

What we decide to do - while on THIS side of heaven - with the knowledge we have about what Jesus Christ has done for us by

sacrificing Himself on the cross...is what determines our entrance into heaven.

So, all those jokes we both tell and hear about the Norwegian, Swede, and Irishman dying and going to heaven and meeting St. Peter at the pearly gates and St. Peter asking questions as to why they should be let into heaven...are just jokes! St. Peter does not decide if you get into heaven AFTER you die. That is a decision you and I make BEFORE we die while we can make decisions!

If we arrive at the “Judgment Seat of Christ” we ARE in heaven! It does not determine our entrance into heaven.

SLIDE –

3. It has **NOTHING** to do with punishment for our sins
And this is where I want us to look at John 3:16-18 because they are a reminder to us that our sins have been dealt with and we will no longer have to pay any punishment for them.

SLIDE –John 3:16-18

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

SLIDE –John 5:24

I tell you the truth; whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

And then one of the greatest verses of all time to confirm to us that this judgment is NOT to punish us for our sins...

SLIDE –Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

“Jesus Dropped The Charges”

So, if the Judgment Seat of Christ has nothing to do with punishment for our sins...what is it for? Why will there even be a Bema Seat Judgment?

FACT #4...

SLIDE –

4. It is for the Lord to evaluate the ministries or services that we have done for Him and give us awards/rewards! CROWNS

The Judgment Seat of Christ is all ‘in our favor’ (if I can say it that way)! We have nothing to fear when we meet Jesus. When we see Him face to face He will evaluate us - oh yes! But...

- not to put us down or
- point out all our wrongs or
- shake His finger at us and tell us we could have done better or
- show us where we failed Him

None of that! That has all been paid for by His blood that was shed at the cross if we have put our faith and trust in Him as our Savior. THIS is to receive our rewards for what we have done FOR Him as a believer while we are on earth!

These are the key verses about the Believers Judgment so I want to simply walk through them with you today.

The first is...Romans 14:10-12

SLIDE –**Some Important VERSES** (on the Judgment Seat)

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:10-12

SLIDE –I Corinthians 3:6-15

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

SLIDE –

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 Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw...

SLIDE –

...his 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 man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Things done out of love for Jesus will receive their rewards! If the motive for doing something wasn't out of love for the Lord, He will take care of that at the Judgment Seat and it will be weeded out. QUALITY is the key here. And you and I don't have to try to beat ourselves silly figuring out if our motives were pure or not in the work that we did for Christ! We CAN'T figure it out. God and God alone knows the motives and that is why He makes the judgment call on that Day.

The Believers Judgment is again talked about in II Corinthians 5...

SLIDE –II Corinthians 5:1-10

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Now here is our verse...

SLIDE –

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Good = useful

Bad = useless/worthless

Not 'bad' in a sense of doing something bad...remember we have already covered that by showing all our sin, bad things...are not condemned! They are already forgiven!

Bad just means I thought I would get a reward for them but I don't. Remember, He judges all things righteously. We don't!

Both [Romans 14:10](#) and [2 Corinthians 5:9](#) speak of the "judgment seat." This is a translation of one Greek word, the word *bema*. While

bema is used in the gospels and Acts of the raised platform where a Roman magistrate or ruler sat to make decisions and pass sentence), its use in the epistles by Paul, because of his many allusions to the Greek athletic contests, is more in keeping with its original use among the Greeks.

SLIDE –Bema Seat at Corinth



This word was taken from Isthmian games (like our Olympic Games) where the contestants would compete for the prize under the careful scrutiny of judges who would make sure that every rule of the contest was obeyed (cf. [2 Tim. 2:5](#)). The victor of a given event who participated according to the rules was led by the judge to the platform called the *Bema*. There the laurel wreath was placed on his head as a symbol of victory (cf. [1 Cor. 9:24-25](#)).

In all of these passages, Paul was picturing the believer as a competitor in a spiritual contest. As the victorious Grecian athlete appeared before the *Bema* to receive his perishable award, so the Christian will appear before Christ's *Bema* to receive his imperishable award. The judge at the *Bema* bestowed rewards to the victors.

Now, what does Scripture say will be our rewards!

SLIDE –What Will Our Rewards Be?

1. Imperishable Crown
2. Crown of Exultation or Joy
3. Crown of Righteousness
4. Crown of Life
5. Crown of Glory

We will talk about each of these as the next couple of weeks progress. By the way...

SLIDE –What Will We Do With Our Rewards?

They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

"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."

Are you ready to...with a pure heart and for the right motives...serve our Lord and Savior afresh and anew! May that be yours and my commitments in the New Year!

SLIDE – THE CROWNS

Bow...

Greatest Crown...crown of thorns that Jesus wore for you and me!