

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Part 1

Speaker	Jack Atkins
Duration	00:46:10
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ja006/the-judgment-seat-of-christ

Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Chapter 14 of Romans Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

For one believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not.

And let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him.

Who art thou that judgest another man's servants? To his own master he standeth or falleth, yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand.

One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike.

[00:01:04] Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord.

And he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks.

And he that eateth not to the Lord, he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.

Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.

[00:02:08] But why dost thou judge thy brother?

But why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, [00:03:02] that there is nothing unclean of itself. But to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Verse 20.

For meat destroy not the work of God.

All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

And then in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 3. [00:04:11] 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 9.

Verse 10.

For we are labourers together with God.

Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.

But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, [00:05:09] 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.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.

But he himself shall be saved, yet so is by fire.

And finally, in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

Chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 9 and 10.

[00:06:10] Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

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.

It is an undeniable fact that many Christians regard the subject of the second coming [00:07:07] of our Lord Jesus Christ as being of the greatest possible importance.

It is also an undeniable fact that many of the Lord's people do not so regard it.

Now that is a very sad thing.

For there are many able teachers of God's word, who appear to ignore the subject almost entirely, or very, very rarely refer to it.

But there are certain aspects of the second advent, the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, which concern us, not only in a general sense, [00:08:01] but also in a very personal and individual way.

And one such subject is that of the judgment seat of Christ.

No subject could concern us surely more personally, more nearly, more individually, in connection with the Lord's return, than does the subject of the judgment seat of Christ.

Now may I suggest, brethren, that this is a neglected subject?

I feel it to be so.

It's a vitally important one. It's one that should cause us, I'm quite sure, a great deal of, perhaps, heart searching.

Certainly a great deal of exercise before the Lord, as we think of it.

[00:09:03] Now I believe that some neglect it because of fear, because of apprehension, they think of punishment and shameful exposure.

Now, you know, I feel that such an attitude as this is wrong, it is unhealthy, it is unscriptural, it is unintelligent, for it is a subject, I believe, to which we should give very close attention.

Now there is a scripture that says, I know, that there is a certain fearful looking-for of judgment.

But that's nothing whatever to do with the judgment seat of Christ, the Beamer of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[00:10:03] There is indeed a certain fearful looking-for of judgment on the part of those who don't know the Lord. For the issue is plain and clear for any unsaved soul should there be here tonight.

The issue is just that.

It is Christ or it is judgment. It's as clear as that.

Now this afternoon I want to take this subject, if I can, with God's help, under four heads. First, why is there to be a judgment seat?

Secondly, distinctions and differences between the various judgments that are future. Thirdly, how does the Lord assess our lives and service as believers?

And lastly, in what atmosphere [00:11:04] will the judgment seat of Christ be conducted?

Why is there to be a judgment seat?

First I would say that there is to be a judgment seat because the holiness of God requires it.

The holiness of God requires it. The same Savior who promised to come and to receive us unto himself, that same Savior for whose coming we daily look, is the same one who walks in the midst of the candlesticks, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That same person is the very one who will appear on the judgment seat.

And the record of the Christian service will be unveiled.

[00:12:01] And that which was of worth in the Lord's eyes, mark that, that which was of worth in the Lord's eyes will be rewarded.

And that which was unworthy will be rejected.

It will be cast out.

It will be burnt up.

It will be burnt up.

And the believer concerned will be glad that it's burnt up in that day.

The holiness of God requires it. And then I believe that the judgment seat of Christ is necessary because of the vital teaching of Scripture on the subject, particularly just now in the 14th chapter of Romans, from which our brother read, on another, on debatable things.

[00:13:02] On debatable things.

He that regardeth a day, regardeth it unto the Lord.

He that regardeth not a day, regardeth it not unto the Lord.

But don't let us suppose that it doesn't matter how we live, because it does, or what we do.

The Scripture goes on to say in Romans 14, None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Now I must make it very clear that it's not a question of the believer being judged for his sins. There's no question at all about that here. Romans 8 makes that abundantly clear. There is therefore now no condemnation, no judgment to those that are in Christ Jesus. [00:14:04] Hallelujah! Praise God that's true. We are not judged in that day for our sins.

And again in the 33rd verse, I think it is at that chapter, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.

Who is he that condemneth?

And then we have the Lord's assurance in John 5, 24, don't we? That much-loved verse, where the Lord says, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.

What then is the meaning?

Simply this, my friend, all our lives, mark this, all our lives as believers are laid before the Lord.

[00:15:01] His eye misses nothing.

He evaluates everything, everything, as to our judgment of other believers.

The Lord evaluates.

Now again, we must not read into Scripture what is not there. This doesn't teach us to be indifferent where moral evil is concerned. It doesn't teach us to be indifferent where wrong doctrine concerning the personal work of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned. Of course not.

That's an entirely different matter. But it does teach us two great principles which I believe emerge from the 14th of Romans.

The first is this. You'll find it in verse 13.

Not to put a stumbling block in another person's way.

Whatever I do in my life as a Christian, [00:16:01] not to put a stumbling block in another's way, especially and particularly one who is weak in the face.

Oh, this should cause us great exercise of heart and mind. And the other great principle, whatever we allow, whatever we allow, dear Christian friends, in our lives, be very sure that we're happy before the Lord about it before we allow it.

That's the other great principle. And if we gain that glorious truth, we shall learn much from that Scripture. And then I believe that the judgment seat of Christ is necessary to enable us to look at our service through our Lord's eyes and not through our own eyes.

For this is vitally important. Now it's very natural, you know, isn't it? But not necessarily right [00:17:01] for us to make our own judgment as to our own service.

We may think very highly of it. We might undervalue it.

But the Lord is the judge, the Lord himself. It is the judgment seat of Christ.

The word beemer is used, the original word, elsewhere in the New Testament describing a judgment seat.

But the all-important thing here is it's the judgment seat of our Lord, the judgment seat of Christ.

Now we have Scriptural examples of this assessment on the part of the individual of his own service and of how wrong this is. We have the case of the sons of Zebedee who you remember desired a special place, didn't they? Now no doubt their service was of great value and the Lord appreciated it and doubtless will reward it. [00:18:04] But they desired a special consideration. They thought too highly of themselves. And they soon got the answer from the Lord. And then on the other hand we have a person, a very wonderful person, John the Baptist, who found himself getting very depressed about things and having grave doubts as to the person of the Lord and undervaluing his service. And the Lord Jesus puts him right too. And he paid a wonderful tribute to John the Baptist, did our blessed Lord. He valued his service. But there was one, you see, who was inclined to undervalue it. The Lord is the judge, not myself. Sometimes you know we may have spent a great deal of time, a lot of energy, much prayer perhaps, on a particular project for the Lord. And somehow or the other there seems to have been little result. [00:19:05] And we're disappointed, we're upset. We can't understand it. The Lord knows. The Lord understands. And another time you know the reverse is true. Perhaps we spent a great deal of energy and a great deal of prayer and God has blessed that project. Maybe we've not spent as much time on it but we've spent perhaps a little more prayer on it and the Lord has blessed it. The Lord is the judge, not myself. Now it's quite true that much faithful service for the Lord is done quietly, unobtrusively.

Hundreds and thousands don't know about it but the Lord knows about it. And that service will be rewarded by our gracious Saviour. Oh I am certain there's a lot of service like that. [00:20:01] That is done so quietly, so unobtrusively.

And sometimes we hear about it and we rejoice and praise God for it. It's done so quietly. The Lord knows all about it. But there's the other side of the picture. It is also true that there's many a gifted evangelist who by the very nature of his service for the Lord is brought into great publicity. He faces the glare of publicity and advertisement Brethren, we shouldn't criticize such a man. We should pray for him. We should pray for him that God might keep him humble. That he might be used of the Lord despite the publicity.

Despite the advertisement. The Lord has his servants everywhere. Let us remember that. And if we criticize a person simply and purely and wholly because he's subject to advertisement and publicity [00:21:01] I'm convinced that this is wrong. The Lord is the judge. And he will reward.

Now I want us to note distinctions and differences between the judgments that are yet future in scripture. I believe that there's much confusion of thought on this subject of judgment. Some speak in fact many speak of what they call a general judgment.

But I don't find this in scripture at all.

Only once in 1 John 4 does the expression the day of judgment occur.

Only once.

And yet to hear people talk you'd think that that scripture occurred many times. The day of judgment. What does it mean? There's only that one occasion. And there the apostle speaks of having boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is so are we in this world.

[00:22:03] That scripture's a comfort to me. And I'm sure it is to you dear brother. We have boldness in the day of judgment because as he is as our blessed savior is so are we in God's sight in this world. No the Christian does not need to fear in terms of punishment what someone might call the day of judgment. There are three judgments as I see it that are still future. The judgment seat of Christ our subject this afternoon.

The judgment of the living nations are referred to in Matthew 25 as the throne of his glory.

And the judgment of the great white throne.

These three judgments are yet future.

And I believe that they are separate and wholly distinct the one from the other. [00:23:01] Now I'm aware that there are Christians here this afternoon to whom these things are elementary. I'm also aware that there may be Christians here this afternoon to whom these things are not elementary. And who may be completely confused in their mind as to these important issues concerning the future.

Now as to when these events take place.

When do they occur? The judgment seat of Christ occurs in heaven without a doubt.

After the coming of the Lord for his saints. After what we call the rapture or as I prefer to call it the translation of his saints to glory.

After that and before the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And that's important. We read in Revelation 20 or 19 is it his wife hath made herself ready.

And I believe that there is significance in that. [00:24:02] Because I believe that it is the judgment seat of Christ that demonstrates the readiness of the bride for the marriage supper of the Lamb. His wife hath made herself ready. And if you look at that scripture in Revelation you will see that it is the righteousness of the saints that is referred to. And that the people of God are clothed in linen garments speaking of that righteousness. The truth of which is manifested and demonstrated at the judgment seat. His wife hath made herself ready. So that when the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place the bride of Christ is ready for that glorious event. So that the judgment seat of Christ then occurs before the marriage supper. Therefore before the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory the throne of his glory follows the appearing.

[00:25:01] And it is as I've said the judgment of the living nations. It takes place upon earth. It must take place upon earth. Not in heaven.

And it precedes the millennium. The judgment of the great white throne follows the millennium. At least in fact precisely if you will a thousand years later. And we read in scripture the rest of the dead live not again until a thousand years were finished. So that you see these three judgments are quite separate and quite distinct. The one from the other. And then there's a further difference as to the tests that are applied at these judgment occasions. The believers testing is as to the building of his life.

The kind of fabric that he has erected upon the foundation [00:26:01] of which our brother read to us from the scriptures. The kind of fabric he raises on the one foundation which is Jesus Christ himself. You know friends we sometimes teach a chorus to the children. We teach the children many choruses.

And you know I often think to myself what a good thing it would be if we applied the truth of some of those choruses to ourselves. And the chorus I'm thinking of is this one. Children sing this. We are building day by day in our work and in our play.

It's true of us my friends. We are building. We are building day by day. But how are we building? In our work for the Lord. Or indeed if you will in our leisure and our play. Yes the believers testing is as to the building of his life. The nations are tried as to their treatment [00:27:01] of Christ's brethren as they are called. The preachers of the gospel of the kingdom in the tribulation age. The remnant of Israel. And this judgment takes place upon us. And the difference is made.

Those that do and those that do not know the Lord. The unbelievers are tested.

We read as to their works because they are unbelievers and have rejected the work of the Lord Jesus for them on the cross. They are tested as to their works as unbelievers and as to whether or not their names are written in the book of life. This is the vital test for them. Whosoever was not written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Oh my friend if there should be an unsaved soul here tonight I want you to note with me the solemn progression that there is here. And it is solemn indeed. [00:28:01] At the judgment seat of Christ none are lost, not one soul.

At the judgment of the throne of his glory some indeed are lost.

And at the judgment of the great white throne all are lost without exception. It is indeed a solemn progression. Now how does the Lord Now how does the Lord how vital this is to us how does the Lord assess the value of the believer's life and service?

This is what so closely touches you and me.

How does the Lord assess its value?

Well one thing is abundantly clear if you look in that scripture in 1 Corinthians 3 abundantly clear notice verse 13 of 1 Corinthians 3 what do we read? [00:29:01] The fire shall try each man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire.

Now what is the vital teaching here?

One of our brethren in our prayer meeting before this meeting spoke of the need of reality and that's the vital teaching here. The need of reality before the Lord.

The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Not of what size it is but of what sort it is. It's quality rather than quantity [00:30:02] I'm convinced that matters to the Lord. And how clearly that is shown here from the simple figure that is used. Wood, hay, stubble.

Gold, silver, precious stones.

Take the first three. Wood, hay, stubble.

Each one of these suggests bulk doesn't it?

But relatively little value.

I say relatively little for I have quite a lot to do with timber and I know that timber can be very expensive. It's relative do you see? Wood, hay, stubble.

Stubble is practically valueless. Hay is more valuable. Wood has some value but all have bulk.

You see, it's the quantity aspect of the thing. But then we have gold, silver, precious stones. [00:31:04] This suggests little bulk doesn't it? But, oh my word, infinite value.

Infinite value. Sincerity and depth of purpose I believe are taught by the need for gold, silver, and precious stones rather than the bulky surface. That which looks so big, so great, so wonderful. It may be big and great and wonderful. The Lord is the judge. But you see the thought. It's quality rather

than quantity that really matters. Now, it's sincerity and depth that our Lord looks for. Reality in the heart rather than the desire always to be in the limelight seeking the praise of men. Then if reality enters the master's reckoning what about gifts? What about gifts and spiritual endowment shall we call them? The Lord has given gifts [00:32:02] by the Holy Spirit of God. And you know what? If the Lord has given little little will be expected.

But if that little is forthcoming it will be valued by the Lord and it will be rewarded by the Lord too.

If he's given much then much will be expected.

Of that there can be no question.

Unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required. We read that in Luke 12. It's very, very clear. Now it is undoubtedly true that some have been given great gifts. Much has been given to them and much will be expected from them. But that much must be right as to quality rather than as to quantity.

Now, I imagine someone saying it's no good.

I can't speak in public I'm much too nervous. [00:33:02] Well, I can assure you, my friend that if you talk like that you couldn't be more nervous than I was when I first started speaking. And indeed, I can't recall an occasion whenever I've spoken from a platform in public that I haven't felt nervous. It's a good thing to be nervous. Because if you're really nervous and you don't feel you can cope you can't feel you can cope. If you're really nervous and you don't feel you can cope you're dependent on the Lord who can. It's a good thing to be nervous. So don't make that an excuse. But nevertheless, I take the point it may be that public speaking isn't your particular gift. Maybe you're gifted in some other way. Maybe there's someone here this afternoon who is gifted in a personal way. Someone who's able to speak open our soul about the Lord personally and conversationally [00:34:01] in a way that others of us just cannot do. My friend, if you've been given that gift you've been given a rare gift. A precious gift. And I would say you've been given much. Now the question is, are you using it? Are you using that gift to the glory of your Lord? I knew a dear man of God now with the Lord who couldn't preach on his own admission. He just couldn't preach. He couldn't put a sermon together. He could not speak in public. But my, how that man could talk to a soul. It was wonderful. He had a God-given gift of being able to speak to an unsaved person and win that soul for Christ. He did it many, many times.

It was a rare gift. A lot of folk knew nothing at all about it. They shall declare it. I knew of many souls who were won for the Lord for the Lord through that man's ministry. [00:35:01] But he couldn't speak publicly. Now maybe you're gifted in other ways too. It says, you know, in the scripture he that winneth souls is wise.

But where does that wisdom come from? It isn't human wisdom. It's the wisdom that comes from the Lord. We ask of him.

And he will give us the wisdom to know just in what way the Lord has gifted us.

The Lord has gifted you. Of that I'm sure. And the reward for those who do win souls for Christ and how many do this, the reward is the crown of rejoicing. We read of this in 1 Thessalonians 2.

Remember how the apostle Paul wrote to them? He said to them, Those our hope and joy and crown of rejoicing are not even he in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

At his coming.

[00:36:01] Yes, the soul winner's crown. The crown of rejoicing. Now one further aspect of the Lord's assessment of our lives and that is manifestation.

And here I want to refer you to that scripture our brother read in the second letter to the Corinthians in chapter 5. And verses 9 and 10.

Wherefore we labor that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him for we must all appear and the word really is be manifested we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. That everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad.

Now I must stress again here [00:37:01] that this is not the judgment of the believer's sins.

We are not judged for our sins at the judgment seat of Christ. There's no condemnation to those who trust in the Savior. Don't let anyone ever tell you anything to the contrary. The blessed work of our Lord Jesus Christ has been accepted by God the Father. It is sufficient for your soul, salvation and mine. We do not have to answer for our sins but for our works. For the things done in or as it literally should read by the body whether good or bad.

All must be manifested all must go into the heavenly scales. And the result of this will be reward or loss of reward.

It will not be punishment.

I think that this is the aspect of this subject that's most misunderstood. It is not punishment. There's nothing penal about it. [00:38:01] It's reward or loss of reward. We suffer loss indeed if we don't gain the reward but there's no punishment. Ah you know brethren I think with sadness and I'm sure we all do of the many unresolved troubles between gatherings of the Lord's people between brethren the heartaches, the sorrows the sadnesses that have gone on in the history of the Church of God. The hidden secrets the sleepless nights the anguish of soul that many brethren have known because of these differences of opinion and differences of thought and bitternesses of heart the day shall declare it. The day shall declare it. We wait for that day. Then all shall be made manifest. So often we have to say you know well brother we must leave it to the Lord. [00:39:02] We must leave it to the Lord. The day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire it is a solemn thought it's a very important thought. Some of us were reminded only last evening when our dear brother spoke to us at Bromley on some of the problems and the difficulties that the missionary of today faces in the mission field. He told us of many truly converted souls that he has known about and still knows about now who are ignorant of the need of holiness and godly living who do not know about right relationships in a family context or in an assembly context. They don't know about these things they need to be taught and this is why labourers need to be thrust out that they might be taught [00:40:02] if I can put in a plug for our dear brother for this is the thought the Lord knows all about their ignorance and he knows all about our intelligence as to these very things and the Lord will judge accordingly for he knows what we know and he knows what we don't know. Now lastly in what atmosphere will the judgment seat of

Christ be conducted?

In what atmosphere? I suppose we all know what it is to anticipate an interview with dread. It's been my experience before now once or twice in my career to have known that I had an interview coming up and my knees almost knocking together. We all know what that is I'm sure.

Do we need to feel like that about the judgment seat of Christ about the beamer of our Lord? [00:41:02] No! A thousand times no. We don't need to feel as I've said before there are those who think of punishment and shameful exposure dishonor.

It's really all a matter of our standing before the Lord in that day. Now how do we stand before the Lord in that day? Let me say again that it is not as sinners thank God it's not. The Lord Jesus Christ has borne the punishment that was my due. That is blessedly true not as sinners. We remember the Lord's word he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life shall not come into judgment but is passed from death unto life. No, not as sinners nor may I say strictly speaking brethren is it as sons that we appear there. [00:42:01] This happens now. The scripture says if you endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons.

But this happens now. Now is the time that the Lord chastens his people if need be.

How then?

Not as sinners not as sons but as servants as servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a privilege. What a privilege I say to be a servant of God. I remember at the young believers meeting we can't all be apostles none of us can be apostles but we can be servants servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this introduces many things to cause us exercise as the servants of God. It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful and there's a close affinity between the work of a steward and a servant.

[00:43:02] To be a steward of the Lord's affairs and do we not friends as the servants of God have the management of the Lord's affairs where our service is concerned. In this sense we are stewards. A servant must be faithful to God's word.

Faithful not only in his own life but faithful in the testimony and the preaching of that word. A servant of God should be hospitable he should be sympathetic he should be large hearted he should be approachable. Oh how many things a servant of God ought to be. A servant should look after his body and the Lord knows the strength I have and what strength I haven't got. The Lord knows a servant should look after his body and a servant must keep under his body too. How important that is. The Lord knows all these things. Peter reminds us too of the trial of our faith. [00:44:01] Now how do we react to the trial of our faith in suffering or in persecution? How do we react as the Lord's servants in these circumstances? He also reminds the elders to feed the flock of God. How are the elders feeding the flock of God today? They are the servants of the Lord to feed the flock of God according to his word to be faithful as servants of the Lord. And he follows it up according to his word. How do we give? In that day the chief shepherd shall reward with a crown of glory when he appears. Well we may feel ourselves very inadequate very conscious of failure but let us remember this in that day in that day as the Lord looks upon us his servants however failing [00:45:02] he will look upon us with infinite love for he died for us upon the cross. This is how our Saviour will assess us at the judgment

seat of Christ. Whatever his assessment of our lives the glorious truth to me is this that in that day I shall see it as he sees it.

And if I see something in my life I shall count on it because then I shall see it through the Lord's eyes and I shall properly value it as he values it. And why will this be so? Brethren it will be so for this reason we shall be changed that's why.

We shall be changed we shall look at things differently we shall see things as the Lord sees them [00:46:02] and we shall be made into his glorious likeness.