

Series: **The End of Time**  
Today's Title: **"The Bema Seat of Christ"**

October 8, 2023 – *Selected Passages*

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**Objective:** To help Christians know about our future judgment and how this impacts our life and motivations.

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A lot of times, in preparing a sermon, I try and address problems we face in life and how a particular truth from God's Word is the remedy to our problem.

**Timeless principle:** When we ignore the truth of God's Word, we will encounter problems.

**The problem:** I want to address today is **living without purpose.**

More and more people in today's world – do not see a worthwhile, meaningful purpose to their life.

In fact, one of the tragic ways this manifests in our culture is through a hopeless existence, which can lead to suicide – and last year, our nation set a record for the number of suicides - 49,449.

This lack of purpose and meaning in life manifests in other various ways.

- For some, it can lead to a restlessness – a non-stop agitation with life.
- For others, this can lead to a life where they are bored out of their mind (which often leads to restlessness).

- And, for yet others, this problem can lead to a constant hunger for something that matters – something that fills the soul.

I can remember – when I was in my early 20's – trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life.

I was often frustrated – angry – because I didn't really have a purpose in life.

- I had purpose in my upcoming marriage. Kim and I were engaged.
- I had purpose in our extended families.

But I didn't have a purpose for me – for my life – for work.

I hated working – just for a paycheck.

I needed a larger purpose – one bigger than myself.

I think it was during this time that I talked with a military recruiter about going into the military.

I have always respected the military – I hold those who serve in the military in high regard.

My grandfather was career military...

***The military would give me purpose!!***

But, at that time, I had some health problems (bronchitis?) and I was told I couldn't serve at that time.

I eventually found a job that started to give me some purpose.

God has wired me to help others – and He led me to a job where I could help people get some technical training – learn some job skills so they could get on their feet and become productive in life.

I did that for 3-4 years (?), but I started sensing a desire to do something more – something with a more lasting impact.

Helping people get a decent job – to earn a decent living – that was good – but that wasn't going to last.

*At the end of this life – what good is your career in light of God and His commands?*

This is how the seeds for ministry - that God had implanted in me - began to grow.

I yearned to make a difference – not just in this life – but for eternity.

I eventually found the answer to my search.

About 5 months after we were married – in November of 1989, I started to serve in ministry – leading the Jr. High group at FBC Tempe.

At first it was very part time.

*God led us from there - into full-time ministry.*

Kim worked as a paralegal as I attended seminary.

When I graduated, I was hired on full-time as the Youth Pastor at FBC Tempe.

6 ½ years later, God led us here – and I began serving here in August 2001.

I share my story to illustrate the challenge of so many people in our culture today.

**So many are searching for something of meaning – significance – of worth.**

**Wanting to make a difference.**

This is one of the reasons so many try to fill that huge emptiness inside with stuff – materialism – sex – drugs – hobbies – sports – entertainment – video games – food.

They believe the lie that our culture constantly tells:

- More stuff is what you need.
- More money will make you important and happy.
- Look a certain way – and people will respect you.
- All you need is this kind of car... these kind of clothes... this kind of family.

And everything will be great!

But the Bible is clear – it has always been clear.

Pursuing these things will not bring you lasting joy.

***They will not*** fill an empty heart.

***They will not*** give you lasting satisfaction.

Only God can do that.

Only a relationship with Him can do that.

Only living a life for Christ can provide lasting significance.

**Matthew 6:19-21**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,  
20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.  
21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The things of this earth will not last forever.

Peter tells us this world – even the heavens – will all burn – under the judgment of God – as He then will recreate all things – new and perfect.

**2 Peter 3:7-11**

“...the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly...  
and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed...  
waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!”

This is why Jesus said:

**Luke 12:15**

Then He (Jesus) said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.”

- I’m not saying that we shouldn’t work hard.
- I’m not saying that having stuff is wrong / sinful.
- I’m not saying that we shouldn’t save and invest for retirement – or own nice things.

**I am saying** – if you think you will find lasting satisfaction and life fulfillment in gathering more ‘stuff’ – then you will be living in a delusion.

**I am saying** – if you think the path to happiness and joy in life is through material success and physical pleasure – then you will be living in a delusion.

**The remedy...**

The remedy is not found in this world.

As wonderful as this world can be at times.

This world is fallen – cursed.

But God has given Himself for us.

He has made our redemption from sin possible – through faith in Jesus.

He loves us – and had proven His love for us.

***The remedy is a relationship with Him – faith in Jesus as your Savior.***

God has told us – countless times in the Bible – what the focus and goal of our life should be.

**The remedy is a life-long pursuit of the Lord!!!**

**Psalm 119:2**

“Blessed are those...who seek Him with their whole heart...”

**Proverbs 8:17**

“...those who seek Me diligently find me.”

**1 Chronicles 16:11**

“Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His presence continually!”

There are dozens of verses like this – throughout the Bible.

Jesus said:

**John 10:10**

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Life with Christ...

Life in pursuit of the Lord... seeking the presence of God...

A life dedicated to Him and the mission He’s given us...

This is where we can find lasting purpose and fulfillment – the abundant life!

The abundant life Jesus refers to is certainly a reference to salvation.

But He’s also referring to His followers – Christians – living their life in obedience.

Christians living as God has enabled and gifted them.

Living in light of how God has blessed you and called you to love and serve others.

Living a faithful life – using His blessings for the Gospel – with eternity in mind (“...storing up treasure in heaven.”).

### **The Christian’s future judgment.**

The N.T. clearly teaches that each Christian will be judged by Christ – and this future judgment is called the ‘Bema Seat’ – or judgment seat of Christ.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century – the ‘Bema Seat’ was an elevated platform – where the city official – the judge – would sit and hear cases brought to him for a legal decision.

*Picture of the ‘Bema Seat’ ruins in the ancient city of Corinth.*

When Pilate condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion, he would have been sitting on the ‘Bema Seat’.

So, this is the context – and the name used in the N.T. to describe the judgment of every Christian by Jesus – as He sits on His ‘Bema Seat’.

There are 3 primary passages that speak to the ‘Bema Seat’ of Christ – and there are also many other verses that refer to this directly or in concept.

For today, we’ll focus our attention on the 3 primary passages – and some important details for us to know about the ‘Bema Seat’ of Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 5:10**

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**

“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it.

Let each one take care how he builds upon it.

11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw--



13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”

**Romans 14:10b**

“For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

**When will this take place?**

*Show timeline.*

I believe this will take place in heaven, during the Tribulation.

Could it take place at another time in the future? Yes!

But I believe while the earth and sin are begin judged in the Tribulation, believers will be judged by Christ for how they lived in light of God’s blessings in their life.

**The Bema Seat is not a judgment of sin.**

The Bible is clear: when you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior, your sins are forgiven – all of them – forever.

**John 5:24** – *Jesus speaking*

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

**Romans 8:1**

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

**Micah 7:19**

“He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

**Psalms 103:12**

“...as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.”

The purpose of the judgment seat of Christ, then, will be to determine not the extent of believers' sins but rather the quality of their service for God while on earth.

The sin of believers has already been judged – through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

He took the judgment we deserve – on Himself – as He gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

**Isaiah 43:25**

“I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

**Hebrews 8:12**

“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

The Bema Seat is not a judgment of destination – but one of rewards for faithfulness in this life.

This is a judgment where commendation / praise is given.

**1 Corinthians 4:5**

“... before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”

Question to consider: Will some Christians feel loss / regret / shame / disappointment at the Bema Seat? (Nov. 26?)

**The main question at the Bema Seat... Jesus will ask:**

*What have you done with what I gave you?*

Jesus will judge you based on the gifts, talents, and blessings He has given you in this life, and if you used those things for your own glory and pleasure, or for His purposes.

Did you use these things to accomplish the mission He’s given us – the Church – His followers?

At this judgment, you will not be compared with other Christians. This is a personal judgment – specific to each one of us.

You will not be held responsible for things you didn’t have / receive from the Lord.

You will be judged as to how you used what God gave you.

Each of us will be judged based on our abilities – and what we have received from the Lord.

**The Bema Seat will reward each believer accordingly.**

The Bible seems to teach that rewards at the Bema Seat will be different – customized for each of us and what we did in this life.

**Luke 19** - Parable of the talents is a good template for this judgment.

In that parable, the king goes on a journey, and before leaving, he gave 10 of his servants 10 minas – 1 for each – and told them, “Put this money to work until I come back.” (19:13).

Upon returning, he judged the servants on what they did with the mina he left with them.

Each servant’s reward was specific to how faithful they were with the mina during the king’s trip.

To the servant who did nothing with the mina given to him – he was not rewarded at all.

This is the sense of how we will be judged at the Bema Seat.

We will be judged for what we did *for Him* - with the gifts, talents, and blessings God gave us in this life.

**Ephesians 2:10**

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

This verse speaks to why God saved you.

*There is a purpose for your salvation beyond your own soul.*

This ‘other’ purpose is the mission of God for His Church – and He expects you to use what He’s given you in this life to support and advance the mission.

### **What will these rewards be like?**

The primary reward seems to be in reference to our ruling and reigning with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom – and into eternity.

#### **Revelation 20:6**

“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for a thousand years.”

#### **Revelation 22:5**

“And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

In other N.T. passages it speaks of receiving various crowns for being faithful.

“...the crown of righteousness” - 2 Timothy 4:8

“...crown of life” - James 1:12; Rev. 2:10

“...unfading crown of glory” - 1 Peter 5:4

“...crown of boasting / rejoicing” (?) - 1 Thessalonians 2:19

“...an imperishable crown” - 1 Corinthians 9:25

The greatest reward we can receive is praise from Jesus Himself.

**Matthew 25:21**

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

***Apply it...***

Encourage each other toward love and good deeds.

**Hebrews 10:24-25**

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

When you encourage each other in ministry – to continue when you’re weak, tired, or frustrated, you are making an impact in eternity!

Use your gifts, talents, and resources to strengthen the church and advance the church’s mission.

**1 Corinthians 14:12**

“Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.”

Commit to serving in the church – so the ministry and mission of the church will be at full strength – and it will benefit from every member of the ‘Body’ being engaged. *All 8 cylinders firing!!!*

Look forward to the Bema Seat of Christ!!

***This will be a joyful time*** – as Jesus reveals to us how our faithfulness and obedience was used by Him.

***This will be a time of worship*** – as we offer to Jesus any rewards we receive.

***This will be a time of celebration*** – as we see how God worked through us – as we served Him through the years.

**1 John 4:17** (See also 1 John 2:28)

“And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face Him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.”

Be at peace now, knowing your future is secure in Christ.

Your sin has already been judged – and you have been redeemed through the work of Christ, by the grace of God.

Know your future judgment is one of reward, not punishment or payment for sin.

Live today – and every day – with these truths in the forefront of your mind.

“...encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

***Close in prayer***