

Heaven Glory Revealed—Rewards

May 25, 2014

The *Bema* Seat

- The judgment seat (*bema*) was a raised platform (sometimes portable) that could be reached by steps. It was a place where orations were made. Rulers used the *bema* to elevate them above a trial so they could observe, hear testimonies, and dole out judgments. Scripture speaks of the *bema* twice in reference to the divine tribunal before which believers will stand (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).¹

The *Bema* Seat Has Shaped the Lives of Many Heroes of the Faith

- **Amy Carmichael.** As a little girl, she sensed God whispering 1 Corinthians 3 into her ear. She understood that all of her works would be thrown into the fire, and only those things done for Christ would matter eternally and bring reward. Amy went on to become a missionary to India, opening an orphanage and founding a mission in Dohnavur.²
- **J. Hudson Taylor.** Missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission. Taylor knew he would give account to God for the stewardship of his life and was driven to a life that would allow him to give it with joy.
- **Martin Luther.** The Father of Protestantism, felt that the truth of the *Bema* seat was so important that for years the only two dates on his calendar were “today” and “that day.” Luther knew that if he lived right today, “that day” would take care of itself.³
- **General William Booth.** The founder of the Salvation Army had a vision of going to heaven and being questioned by people and by Christ about his life on earth. He was so horrified by his answers that he wanted one more chance to return to earth and make amends for a wasted Christian life.⁴
- Knowing there are rewards and an accounting to give for how we lived on earth at the *Bema* Seat should shape and mold us as well. The truth of the *Bema* Seat will be transforming if we apply it to our life

The *Bema* Seat Answers Some Important Questions

- How does God decide what level of reward every Christian receives?
- How much responsibility and authority will we receive as we rule and reign with Jesus in heaven?
 - Luke 19:12-27
 - Christians will be rewarded according to their works. The question becomes, “What did you do with what Jesus gave you to glorify God?”
 - The level of your future reward, ruling and reigning with Jesus has everything to do with how much you serve and submit to the rule and reign of Jesus NOW!
 - Heaven and Earth are not two separate “worlds.”
 - Rebecca Ruter Springer wrote, “How little we know of the links binding the two worlds. If only we could realize while we are yet mortals that day by day we are building for eternity how different our lives would

¹ Taken from: M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, Public Domain, Logos Electronic Version.

² Warren Wiersbe, *Ten People Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2011), e-book edition.

³ Randy Alcorn, *The Light of Eternity: Perspectives on Heaven* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 1999), 135.

⁴ General William Booth, *General Booth's Vision and Other Addresses* (New York: Pickett Publishing Co., 1903), 26.

be! Every gentle word, every generous thought, every unselfish deed, will become a pillar of beauty in the life to come. We cannot be selfish and unloving in one life and generous and loving in the next. The two lives are too closely blended—one but a continuation of the other.⁵

- What Scriptures speak about future rewards?
 - There are dozens, including the fact that Jesus starts and ends His teaching with exhortations about rewards!
 - Matthew 6:19–20 and Revelation 22:12
 - We are the ones laying up our own treasures, for ourselves, in heaven. We are responsible for the reward we receive. There is not anyone else. Our reward is according to our work—there isn't redistribution of rewards in Heaven!

The Bema Seat Looks Toward “That Day.”

- 1 Corinthians 3:10–15
 - Gold, silver, and precious stones are valuable Kingdom works—they endure fiery test and are rewarded!
 - Wood, hay, and straw are worthless, selfish behavior—they are burned up. We suffer loss, but we're still saved.
- Our spiritual lives will be touched by a lit match at the Bema Seat. Some Christians will endure and be rewarded. Others will run out of a house on fire.

The Bema Seat is Our Motivation

- It was Paul's motivation
 - Paul uses athletic, Olympic games imagery to stir up a desire in people for God's rewards.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24–25
 - We need to run for our eternal reward as though we want to win.
 - The Christian life takes Holy Spirit-given self-control, focus, and dedication—winning always costs something.
 - The Christian life also takes vision and desire to receive future reward.
 - Paul also used the *Bema* Seat as a motivator to live a life that was pleasing to God.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:8–10
 - The *Bema* Seat motivated him to want to please God.
 - Paul understood the receiving and rewarding in the hereafter was based on how he lived his life in the here and now.
 - Moses lived his life looking toward future reward.
 - Hebrews 11:24–26
 - Moses rejected fleeting pleasure of sin, and the treasures of Egypt because he looked to God's future reward.
 - Moses knew Egyptian riches paled in comparison to the riches God had for him.
 - Our problem isn't that we want too much, we settle for too little, Moses could have settled for Egypt, but he wanted and waited for what God had waiting for him in heaven!

⁵ Rebecca Ruter Springer, *My Dream of Heaven: A Nineteenth Century Spiritual Classic*, (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 2002), 21

Discussion Questions

1. Has the fact that you'll be in heaven satisfied you to such a degree that you don't consider how you will be judged and rewarded once you are there?
2. How has earthly treasure, selfishness, and laziness lured Christians into settling for temporary comfort or riches rather than God's future reward? What can you do to make sure they don't lure you to set aside God's *Bema* Seat rewards?
3. Read Acts 10:42. In your own words, briefly explain how we can be saved by grace and yet still be accountable to God for our lives.
4. Read Luke 19:12-27. How does the returning king reward his servants who have multiplied their *minas*? What mistaken belief about his master gets the third servant into trouble? What does the master do with the third servant's mina? What is the lesson for disciples in this parable?
5. Read Revelation 22:12. Did you know your reward in heaven will be based on your work on earth? How does knowing that change your perspective about living today?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. God will test the quality of our work as fire tests the quality of building materials. What kind of work will withstand His fiery test? What are the rewards of building God's kingdom faithfully and with the best materials?
7. How is your heavenly reward account balance looking? Do you have a lifestyle that makes heavenly deposits through selfless Kingdom service? Or, are you hoarding your gifts, talents and abilities?
8. Are you rich toward God today? Are you laying up treasure on earth or in Heaven?