

The Bema and the Blessing of the New Covenant Promise ("Remembering Our Sins No More")



How can the examination of Christians at the Bema Seat of Christ not violate the New Covenant promise that God will never again remember our sins? What will happen at the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ when the Lord reviews our lives as Christians? Does this mean that in some way our sins will be resurfaced and revealed to us? Will Christ bring up our sins when we stand before the Bema? Does it mean we will be judged as sinners on this day of revelation and examination? If God truly remembers our sins no longer, then how can we in any sense be reminded of our past unfaithfulness and sinful departures from the Lord?

I recall having a lively discussion with a brother in the Lord who deeply loves God and who wholeheartedly and correctly agrees with God's New Covenant promise for every Gospel believer. He repeatedly reminded (and preached!) to me God's New Covenant promise – and rightly so! Here it is.

Jeremiah 31:34 introduces the coming New Covenant promise:

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Hebrews 8:12 picks up on the New Covenant promise:

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Hebrews 10:17 again repeats:

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

I will remember their sins and iniquities no more! What a promise! But how can God guarantee this New Covenant promise if believers are going to be judged or assessed for their living and service as a Christian before the Judgment Seat of Christ? The simple answer is that remembering our sins no more means that from a judicial or legal perspective, God will never resurface and charge our sins against us to condemn us before His throne and cause us to fear His wrath and reprisal.

Romans 8:33-34

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

There will never be any legal condemnation for our sins before God’s throne (Rom. 8:1) for God has forgiven our sins and therefore no longer remembers them. Our forgiveness is sealed, protected by Christ’s priestly or intercessory ministry (Heb. 7:25), and secured forever. However, the New Covenant promise that God gave does not mean Christ cannot examine our lives as His servants and do so without forensically or legally judging us as sinners who stand in jeopardy of losing their legal status of forgiveness and justification before God’s throne. Christ examining the lives of the saints is not the equivalent to remembering their sins again from a legal and judicial standpoint, condemning the saints as sinners, reprimanding them as sinners, and striking the fear of His reprisal and wrath in their hearts as sinners.

In short, the New Covenant promise of no longer remembering the sins of His saints means that no charges of sin will ever be brought against them within the throne room of God (Eph. 1:6; Jude 24). It means their position and legal declaration of forgiveness and justification before God will never change (Rom. 5:21; 3:24; 5:1,9; 8:1; 33-34). Before God’s throne saints never become sinners, Christians never become condemned, failures never replace forgiveness, and sins never override our security (John 10:27-28; Rom. 8:38-39).

A general review of our earthly lives (the good and the bad) does not affect the essential nature and promise of the New Covenant which is to remember our sins no more from a legal or judicial perspective.

But the New Covenant promise of remembering our sins no more does not mean Christ cannot review our lives at the Bema. God is not breaking His promise to never again remember our sins when examining our lives as His saints and servants to grant us eternal reward. *A general review of our earthly lives (the good and the bad) does not affect the essential nature and promise of the New Covenant which is to*

remember our sins no more from a legal and judicial perspective. The New Covenant (“God remembers our sins and iniquities no more”) means we will never be

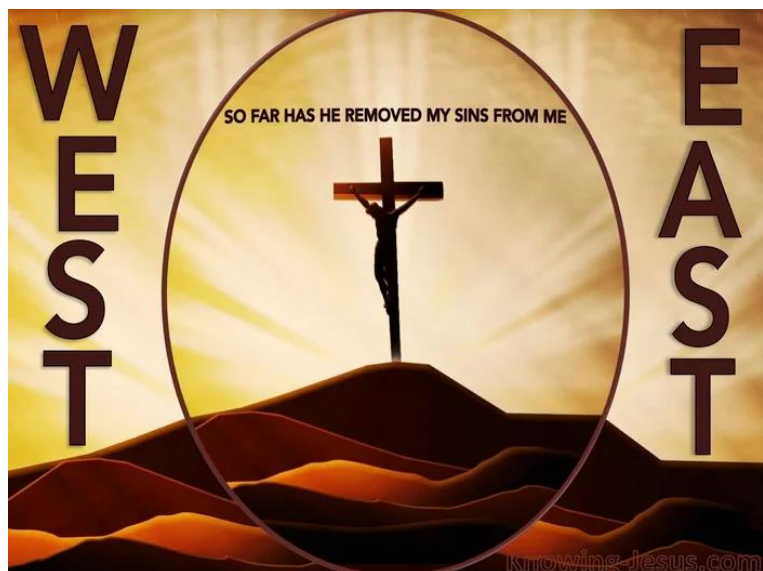
condemned for our sins because legally or forensically (judicially) and eternally we have been saved and secured from the expression of God's wrath forever (Rom. 5:9; John 3:16, 36).



Our sins are gone!
Buried in the deepest depths of the sea as illustrated in the Old Testament words: "thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea" (Miah 7:19). What a beautiful illustration of God's forgiveness and forgetfulness!

"You ask me why I'm happy so I'll just tell you why,
Because my sins are gone;
And when I meet the scoffers who ask me where they are,
I say, "My sins are gone.
They're underneath the blood on the cross of Calvary,
As far removed as darkness is from dawn;
In the sea of God's forgetfulness, that's good enough for me,
Praise God, my sins are gone!"

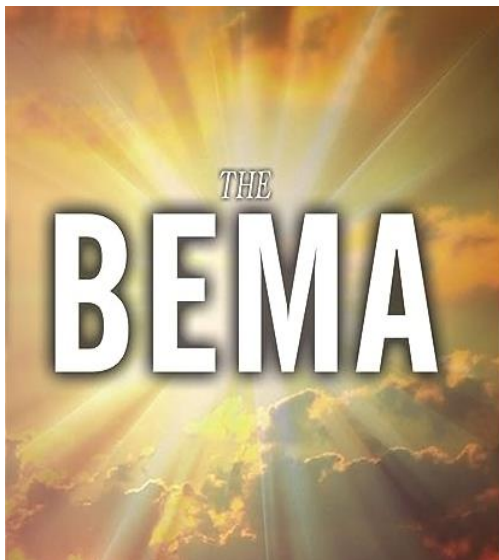
Here is another illustration of forgiveness. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). This is another way of expressing our forgiveness before God. God's forgiveness is eternal. It's like constantly traveling east to west. The old saying is true: "East is east, and west is west, and never the twain shall



meet.” In a similar way the believer and his sins will never meet for the believer has been forever pardoned of all his sins (past, present, and future). Our sins have been put out of God’s sight forever by a miracle of love and grace.

But God’s forgetfulness from a legal and judicial standing before His throne (Rom. 5:1-2) does not override the truth that a day of examination is coming, not to pit our sins against us, not to charge us as sinners, not to threaten us with God’s wrath, but to examine us as God’s servants and determine our eternal reward. The New Covenant promise does not conflict with the evaluation at the Bema Seat of Christ for what occurs at the Judgment Seat of Christ does not affect or change our positional forgiveness and standing before God. The Bema does not change the way God views our sins as being eternally forgiven and forgotten in His presence through the sacrifice of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rom. 5:9).

The Bema examination is not an affront on the New Covenant promise. God never contradicts Himself or goes back on His promises (2 Cor. 1:20; Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25). We can be sure about this. But forgetting our sins does not cancel out God’s right to examine the saints as servants to reward them for their faithful living and service (1 Cor. 4:2; Matt. 25:21).



2 Corinthians 5:10 reveals the scene of the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ: **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ** (*Bema – a place of reward and recognition for what we have done and how we have lived for Christ*); **that every one** (*inclusive of all Christians*) **may receive** (*receive a payment of reward or loss of reward at this judgment seat*) **the things done in his body** (*deeds rendered unto God or the flesh while living on earth*), **according** (*with regard in relation to and in proportion*) **to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad** (*inclusive of both good and bad works – worthy or worthless works*).

The Bible teaches that we will someday be examined as Christ’s Church (Christians) in relation to how we have lived our lives on earth. Our holiness, faithfulness, good deeds, services rendered unto the Lord will all be considered and in one sweeping

judgment we will receive and lose reward in proportion to how we have conducted our lives on earth. The record and score we receive at this final exam will reveal to us the level of our faithfulness in relation to our “good” (worthy and useful) and “bad” (unworthy or worthless) deeds. Paul wrote elsewhere, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5). The concept of “bad” and “hidden things of darkness” reveal that Paul is addressing fleshly and sinful activities of the mind and heart.



Does the word “bad” really mean something that is bad? Some expositors are so concerned about believers being judged for their sins at the Bema that they attempt to assign a different meaning to the word “bad” (kakos) which is the Greek Received Text reading. It is translated elsewhere as “evil” (1 Cor. 15:33; James 3:8; 1 Pet. 3:10; 3 John 11; Rev. 2:2). It refers to something that is intrinsically worthless because it is morally evil in nature. Even if one follows the other Greek text the word “phaulon” also has the connotation of something flawed and worthless because it is evil in a moral sense and is therefore translated as “evil” elsewhere (John 3:20; 5:29; Rom. 9:11; Titus 2:8. James 3:16).

One author who feared that “bad” (2 Cor. 5:10) could mean sinful works termed what is “bad” as referring to “bad” good works, works done merely with a wrong motive. But this makes no interpretive sense. Bad good works sound like a “word salad” or mixed-up words that do not make sense! What is a wrong motive? It’s sin! What is unfaithful stewardship? It’s a sin (“to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” - James 4:17).

This word (“bad”) refers to something that was “foul” smelling like garbage. If you put some food out in the garage and you have a couple of 90-degree days, you can be sure it is going to be foul smelling. Garbage is garbage. There is nothing good about it. All of our fleshly deeds and lack of sanctification and stewardship will be something that is totally worthless and foul smelling when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Here is the point. We cannot run away from the truth that in the process of this examination there will be certain deeds or works brought out into the light which

can be deemed as worthless or “wood, hay, and stubble” (1 Cor. 3:12). *Remember there would be no need for any examination if this judgment only relates to our good works.* There must be a judgment that separates the good from the bad so only the good remains (1 Cor. 3:12-15). As the “righteous Judge” (2 Tim. 4:8) Christ must give a general scan of our lives to accurately assess and reward us for the “good” we have accomplished. At the Bema, we will in some measure experience a revelation to our minds and hearts of the true nature of our sanctification and service while living on earth. We cannot wiggle out of this!

But here is the good news! We are promised a position of grace and acceptance before God’s throne that does not involve wrath, condemnation, retaliation, and rebuke for our sins



because we are not being judged for our sins (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:1). **But how can God remember our sins no more under the New Covenant (Heb. 8:12; 10:17) and still review our lives? How can both be true?** The same way it’s true today. God can review our lives without condemning us as sinners (“I know thy works” - Rev. 2:9,13,19) because of our position in grace (Rom. 5:1-2). Grace does not condemn us as sinners in this life nor will this occur before the Bema as we enter the next life. The blessed truth about God remembering our sins no more means that He does not *view* us as sinners in Christ nor *treat* us as sinners before His throne (Rom. 3:24; Jude 24).

Erwin Lutzer wrote:

“Even if our sins are represented as forgiven, we cannot escape the conclusion that our lifestyle is under judicial review, with appropriate rewards and penalties.”

This is a true and Biblical assessment of what is going to occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ for Christians.

- ✓ What will be your score on the final exam for God’s saints?
- ✓ Will you pass the test?
- ✓ How serious are you about living a sanctified life for Jesus Christ?
- ✓ Have you been living with eternities values in view?

Here is more good news! Christ can perform this scanning judgment upon our lives at the Bema without hounding and haunting us for our fleshly deeds and sins,

without bringing them against us, and condemning us as sinners before His throne. The nature of grace is to pass over sin and not bring condemnation against His people for their sins (Ex. 12:13; 23; 1 Cor. 5:7). This will be what occurs at the Bema. The Bema is grace oriented for Christ is rewarding us for the good things we have done and not condemning us as sinners. Its focus is on rewards.



It is true that the Bema is a judgment seat or place of condemnation (James 3:1; 5:9); however, it is condemnation that relates to our service as a Christian – not condemnation for our actual sins. The condemnation aspect of this judgment has to do with our *service* – not our *sins*. We will be judged as a *servant* – not a *sinner*. We will also “give account” (Rom. 14:12; 1 Pet. 4:5; Heb. 13:17) of our

entire lives as it relates to our sanctification and service for the Lord, but this accountability before God does not mean our sins will be counted against us as sinners (Micah 7:19; Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12; 10:17). **It is true. God remembers our sins no more. They will never be held against us!** What this means is that we will be accountable to Christ as a *servant* but not as a *sinner* and be judged accordingly with gain or loss of reward (2 Cor. 5:10).

The grace relationship of our standing of acceptance and positional forgiveness before God’s throne (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:12) means that Christ will not harass us for our sins, verbally rebuke us, make us confess certain sins, and experience the fear of His reprisal and judgment for any of our sins. This is because we will not experience God’s wrath for our sins. Yes, in some general way “the hidden things of darkness” (2 Cor. 4:2), the “bad” or worthless (2 Cor. 5:10), and the “wood, hay, and stubble” (1 Cor. 3:12) related to our Christian life and service on earth will be disclosed to us at the Bema. Apparently we will know if the good outweighs the bad or the bad outweighs the good for the Bible says we will “suffer loss” (1 Cor. 3:15). This is something we will experience. However, never could any of our sins in our Christian life be judicially brought before or against us at the Bema. This means God will not condemn or rebuke us for our sins, (Rom. 8:33-34), chastise us for not being faithful, and see if we were good enough to enter Heaven (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

Remembering our sins no more (Heb. 8:12; 10:17) is a blessed salvation truth but this does not mean God cannot review our lives and prove the level of our

faithfulness and reward us accordingly (“according to that he hath done,” “according as his work shall be” and “according to your works” – 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23; 22:12). The New Covenant promise of no longer remembering our sins means that God will never resurface our sins to use them against us, to bring His wrath against us (John 3:36), and to change our destiny from Heaven to Hell (Eph. 1:3).

Christ will not be judging Christians for their sins and as SINNERS but judging them as SAINTS and SERVANTS to reward them for their sanctification and service. Our *position* before God’s throne is not in question at the Bema but the *practice* related to our Christian living and service will be examined and brought out into the light so that we will personally know Christ is the “righteous judge” (2 Tim. 4:8) who has properly assessed our lives and rewarded us accordingly.

Christ will not be judging Christians for their sins and as SINNERS but judging them as SAINTS and SERVANTS to reward them for their sanctification and service.

God is not viewing His saints as sinners before His judgment bar but as saints before a rewards assembly.

We are not standing before the Bema as sinners but as justified saints (Rom. 3:28) to be rewarded as God’s servants (2 John 1:8; Rev. 22:12; 1 Cor. 15:58). The Judgment Seat of Christ is not a day of *reckoning* in relation to our sins but a day of *reward* for serving the Lord. The Bema will be a time of *commendation* for our good works – not *condemnation* for our sins. It is a time of *reward* – not *retribution*. We must remember that God is not

viewing us as sinners before His judgment bar but as saints before a rewards assembly. This means we will never answer for our sins, be rebuked, disciplined, and lose our justified position before God (Rom. 5:9) because of our sins. But we will lose reward which we otherwise could have received because of our lack of sanctification and commitment to Christ’s cause and the Christian life (2 John 8).

The focus and primary purpose of this judgment is to distribute rewards to God’s saints (1 Cor. 3:8; 9:27; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:8). It involves the expression of Christ’s love and goodness toward His Church in rewarding His people (Ps. 34:8) for in the

end every man shall have praise of God (1 Cor. 4:5). For this reason, our experience at the Bema will not be focused upon confession of sins, Christ's rebuke, verbal disciplinary judgment, and chastisement for a misspent life.

Once again, if everything in our lives is only good, there would be no need for a judgment. Therefore, our grace relationship with Christ does not override the fact that the Lord will in a general way expose who we really were and how we lived our lives on earth as Christians. The level of our faithfulness will be known. At the same time, because of our positional standing in Christ and grace (Rom.

5:1-2), we will not be judged for our sins, nor will we possess fear in our hearts that God's wrath will be meted against us in any way. God will never remember our sins because of our judicial and legal standing of forgiveness before His throne (1 John 2:1) based upon the finished work of Christ (John 19:30).

**God will never
remember our sins
because of our judicial
and legal standing of
forgiveness before His
throne (1 John 2:1)**

The New Covenant promise of never remembering our sins implies that God will never judge us for our sins; it does not mean Christ cannot examine our lives as His saints and servants to determine our reward for "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14).

**God cannot remember
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3:19; Rom. 4:5; Col. 2:14)**

In conclusion, the promise of the New Covenant does not keep Christ from giving a final examination of our Christian life and service on earth (2 Cor. 5:10). *Our sins are not the focus at the Bema, they are not being held against us, but our faithfulness/unfaithfulness rendered unto God will be what is ultimately judged.* God cannot remember our sins for they are judicially forgiven and forgotten in the legal ledger or record of Heaven (Eph. 1:7; Acts 3:19; Rom. 4:5; Col. 2:14). God has a big eraser! Nevertheless, to accurately reward us, God will in some general

way reveal the level and extent of our sanctification, service, and the sincerity of our Christian living on earth.

Although the RECORD of our sins is erased and gone forever (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), the RESULTS of our sins in our Christian life will still be on the table and considered at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). In other words, the selfish and carnal aspects of our Christian life will in a broad way be reviewed by God at the Bema Seat of Christ. This review is not the judgment of a sinner waiting a verdict of “guilty or not guilty” but the judgment of a saint waiting the review of his life and being rewarded accordingly.

Although the RECORD of our sins is erased and gone forever (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) the RESULTS of our sins in our Christian life will still be on the table and considered at the Bema.

This general judgment and assessment of our Christian lives, *from the time of our second birth*, until death or the Rapture, reminds us that the way we live will have a rippling effect that will go on for eternity. Only one life will soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last! The awesome revelation of God’s righteous judgment upon our life as a Christian will result in reward that will be experienced for eternity.

When I was a boy, I used to throw stones in the ponds where I would be fishing. I often wondered why I did not catch many fish! Well, when you threw a stone in the water a rippling effect would begin to travel across the entire pond. It is amazing how one little stone could have such a far-reaching effect upon that large body of water. In the same way, the way we live our lives today will have a rippling effect that will go on for eternity! The things that we do and say today will affect our eternal reward or “treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:19-21).

How we live today will have a rippling Effect that will last forever!



Earl Radmacher said:

“The person I am becoming today, is preparing me for the person I shall be for all of eternity.”

“Every man on earth is given just one life
Every life on earth is but a vapor.
It appears, then it's gone
With a record of what's done,
Then we stand alone at the judgment seat of Christ
God's Holy Son.

We must all bow down at the judgment seat of Christ.
We must give account for the things we've done with our lives.

I will live my life for Jesus Christ
So that in eternity my life will be
Gold and silver and precious stones.”