

The Judgement Seat of Christ

βῆμα (bēma, 'bayma')

Definitions & N.T. Occurrences:

- 1) a step, pace, the space which a foot covers, a foot-breadth, lit., "footroom"
 - 1a) a small piece of ground (**Acts 7:5**)
- 2) a raised place mounted by steps, by implication a tribunal.
 - 2a) a platform, tribune
 - 2a) 1) of a raised place or platform, reached by steps, originally that at Athens in the Pnyx Hill, where was the place of assembly; from the platform orations were made. The word became used for a tribune, two of which were provided in the law courts of Greece, one for the accuser and one for the defendant; it was applied to the tribunal of a Roman magistrate or ruler (**Matthew 27:19, John 19:13, Acts 18:12, 16, 17, 25:6, 10, 17**)
 - 2a) 2) of the judgement seat of Christ (**Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10**)
 - 2a) 3) Herod built a structure resembling a throne at Caesarea, from which he viewed the games and made speeches to the people. (**Acts 12:21**)

O.T. occurrences (in the 'Septuagint', a translation of the O.T. into Greek for Greek-speakers of N.T. times)

- 1) **Deuteronomy 2:5** Not even a foot-breadth of land (cf. **Acts 7:5**)
- 2) **Nehemiah 8:4** The wooden platform that Ezra the scribe stood on to read the book of the law

So, often used to mean a judgement seat, by implication because it is a raised 'step'. Just as we sometimes refer to the judge's 'bench'. The word 'bench' is neutral, but gets its meaning from the context.

In the context of **2 Corinthians 5:10**, Paul writes about each one receiving from the Lord Jesus according to what we have done in our bodily life. In the verse before, he talks about seeking to be pleasing to him, and the analogy with Jesus' parables about servants being given large sums of money by their masters seems appropriate. See **Matthew 25:14-29 & Luke 19:12-26**. (A talent was equivalent to about 15 times a labourer's annual wages, so say 15 x £15,000 = £225,000, and a mina was about 100 days' wages, say £5,000.)

A measure of judgement was exercised by the master, but it was only condemnation when the investment (and the master who gave it) was scorned. For the other servants, who at least did *something* with the cash, there was 'judgement', but it was much more like 'assessment'.

Judgement for the Believer - ?

John 5: 24 and **1 John 3:14** seem clear enough. The past tense is great!

Revelation 20:11-15. The 'great white throne' judgement, when every single person, living or dead, is judged according to their deeds, as found recorded in the books. No one is noted as being found not guilty by their own deeds; the only escape from the lake of fire is to have one's name written in the book of life. (other references to the book of life in **Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 21:27**)



Picture of 'bema' on Pnyx Hill, Athens, the site of Athenian democratic assembly ('ekklesia') since as early as 507 BC. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pnyx> for more information.

Dave Taylor, June 2015

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