

# “THE DAY” IS THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

**BOB WILKIN**

Editor

## I. INTRODUCTION

Several years ago at a Pre-Trib Study Group Conference I heard Dr. Richard Mayhue speak on *the day of the Lord*. He suggested that the day of the Lord has been (in the OT) and will be (in the Tribulation) a time of judgment followed by a time of blessing for Israel.

As an aside, Dr. Mayhue suggested that there are similar expressions using the words *day* and *Lord* that do not carry that meaning. He said that the expressions *the day of the Lord Jesus* and *the day of Christ* always refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Bema, and never to the Tribulation.

This study will examine those expressions and will show that they indeed refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will also show that even the single word *day* (*hēmera* in Greek) often refers to the Bema.

For years I missed the point of all these texts because I didn't understand these important truths. My thesis is that we will miss what the Lord is telling us in these various passages if we fail to recognize that the day of the Lord Jesus is His Judgment Seat.

## II. THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS

Let's begin by looking at two closely related expressions, the day of the Lord Jesus and the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three such passages in the NT.

### A. FIRST CORINTHIANS 1:8

Paul's prayer for the believers in Corinth was that they "may be blameless *in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (emphasis added). This is typically understood by commentators as a desire that they prove to be true believers who ultimately make it into the

kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Morris writes, “Christ, who has enriched the Corinthians and given them grace and every good gift, is their guarantee that right through until the end time nothing will be lacking in them... They may be assured that they will be *blameless* in that day.”<sup>2</sup>

Such an interpretation is, of course, inconsistent with the free gift of eternal life. Believers need not do anything in order to enter the kingdom. Even believers who fail to persevere in faith or good works are guaranteed to spend eternity with the Lord Jesus. While not all believers will be blameless on that day, all believers will enter the kingdom.

Recognition that *Paul is talking about being blameless at the Judgment Seat of Christ* allows this passage to make perfect sense. When this passage is linked to other texts in First and Second Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 3:13; 5:5; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 1:14; 5:9-10), the full picture emerges.

#### B. FIRST CORINTHIANS 5:5.

When dealing with an immoral man in the church in Corinth, Paul instructs the church to “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit might be saved *in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> The salvation here is normally understood as kingdom entrance.<sup>4</sup> Morris writes, “That this means saved in the fullest sense<sup>5</sup> is made clear by the addition, *on the day of the Lord*.<sup>6</sup> At the final day of judgment<sup>7</sup> he expects to see the disciplined offender among the Lord’s

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Charles Ellicott, *St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: The James Family Christian Publishers, 1887, reprint edition, n.d.), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 38.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added. The majority of NT manuscripts include *Jesus* here. However, the Critical Text, from which we get translations like the NASB and the NIV, exclude it. In my opinion this is another example of where the Majority Text makes a big difference in interpretation over the Critical Text.

<sup>4</sup> Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, Second Edition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), 99-100.

<sup>5</sup> By this he clearly means kingdom entrance, escaping eternal condemnation, and all that attends such salvation.

<sup>6</sup> Note that Morris is commenting on the Critical Text reading and this is having an impact on his interpretation as well.

<sup>7</sup> *Final judgment* is a term many commentators use to refer to a general judgment in which all people of all time, believers and unbelievers, will be judged to determine their eternal destiny. Typically people who use this expression to not distinguish between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White

people.”<sup>8</sup> Thus most think that Paul is saying that an erring Christian must have his flesh destroyed by God’s temporal judgment in order for him to make it into the kingdom.

What about the believer who does not respond properly to church discipline? In this way of viewing the passage, he ends up in the lake of fire! That is, he ends up not being eternally saved.

That view doesn’t make sense. If a person is eternally secure, and all believers are, then why would they need their flesh destroyed in order for them to stay eternally secure? And since Paul made it clear in First Corinthians that born again people sometimes die under God’s discipline (1 Cor 11:30),<sup>9</sup> failure to respond properly to God’s discipline does not lead to the loss of eternal life.

The key to understanding this verse is recognizing that the Judgment Seat of Christ, a place for the evaluation of the works of believers, is under view. The salvation here is Bema-related. Paul is speaking of *the health* of this man’s spirit,<sup>10</sup> his *spiritual wellness* at the Bema. Paul’s desire is for the church to exercise church discipline on this man with the result that his immorality is destroyed and that he might be spiritually healthy at the Bema.

### C. SECOND CORINTHIANS 1:14

Paul envisions a mutual boast. Paul says that he and his coworkers “are your boast as you also are ours, *in the day of the Lord Jesus*”

Throne Judgment. Of course, the Lord Himself indicated that the believer “shall not come into judgment” concerning his eternal destiny (John 5:24). And a careful reading of Rev 20:11-15 shows that even that judgment is not for the purpose of determining the eternal destiny of the lost. The purpose of that judgment is two-fold: to determine the degree of suffering unbelievers will experience forever based on an evaluation of their works (as found in the books, plural), and to announce who will be cast into the lake of fire (anyone whose name is not found written in the book of life).

<sup>8</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 86, italics his.

<sup>9</sup> Note that Paul says that “some sleep.” When used figuratively in the NT, sleep (*koimaomai*) refers exclusively to the death of believers (cf. Matt 27:52; John 11:11-12; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13-15; and 2 Pet 3:4). It never is used to refer to the death of an unbeliever.

<sup>10</sup> The verb to save (*sōzein*) is often used in the NT to refer to health. See, for example, Matt 9:21-22; Luke 8:36; Acts 4:9; 14:9; Jas 5:15. Paul is clearly not speaking of the health of the body here, but of the health of the spirit (see also 1 Cor 3:15 and 15:2).

(emphasis added). What would this mean if one views this as a reference not to the Bema, but to the Tribulation? Commentators vaguely speak of this *day of the Lord Jesus* as the time when “every person’s life and work will be subject to divine scrutiny.”<sup>11</sup>

The ambiguity vanishes when one makes it clear that Paul is speaking of the Judgment Seat of Christ, the time when *believers* will be subject to the scrutiny of the Lord Jesus to determine *their eternal rewards*. Once the issue of one’s eternal destiny is removed, passages such as this one open up like a flower in the sun.

### III. THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE DAY OF CHRIST

There are four references in the NT to the day of Christ or the day of the Jesus Christ.

#### A. PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Of what future event was Paul speaking when he said he was “confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it *until the day of Jesus Christ*” (emphasis added)?

This verse is actually a problem passage for the Free Grace position because two things are misunderstood in it, the *good work* and *the day of Jesus Christ*.

Most commentators see the good work that God had begun in the Philippians as good works which they did.<sup>12</sup> Thus this verse is often cited as a proof text for the Reformed Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. For example, in his 1993 book, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles*,<sup>13</sup> John MacArthur cites Phil 1:6

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<sup>11</sup> Colin Kruse, *2 Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 14. See also, for example, Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1859, reprinted in 1980), 15-16.

<sup>12</sup> For an additional example beside John MacArthur, see Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 62-64. Martin sees “the good work” as including the financial participation of the Philippians in Paul’s ministry, but ultimately including their perseverance in good works of all types until they go to be with the Lord. He is extremely vague as to what “the day of Jesus Christ” refers.

<sup>13</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993).

six times, making it one of the most cited verses in that work.<sup>14</sup> He sees this verse as promising that one’s faith and good works continue to the end of one’s life: “Real faith cannot be defective or short-lived but endures forever (Phil 1:6; cf. Heb 11).”<sup>15</sup> After quoting Phil 1:6 he says, “‘Grace’ that does not affect one’s behavior is not the grace of God.”<sup>16</sup> In a rather remarkable statement for a Calvinist, he says, “God does not declare someone righteous whom He does not also make righteous. Having begun the process [of making one righteous], He will continue it to ultimate glorification (Rom 8:29-30; cf. Phil 1:6).”<sup>17</sup>

As John Hart has well demonstrated in a two-part *JOTGES* article, the good work is specifically the financial participation of the Philippians in Paul’s ministry and the day in view is the Bema.<sup>18</sup>

Philippians 1:6 is no problem text at all if we recognize that “the day of Jesus Christ” is the Judgment Seat of Christ. That verse is a straightforward statement of Paul’s belief that the gifts of the Philippians to his ministry will have ongoing fruit until the Bema. Clearly implicit is the point made explicitly by Paul in Phil 4:17, that the Philippians at the Bema will be highly rewarded for their support of Paul.

## B. PHILIPPIANS 1:10

A few verses later, Paul prays that their “love may abound still more and more...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense *till the day of Christ*” (emphasis added). Commentators once more see this as a reference to a general

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 267. He cites Phil 1:6 on pages 24, 33, 71, 110, 185, 192. According to the Scripture index no other passage is cited more than six times. Indeed, only 4 others passages are cited six times: Acts 17:30; Rom 8:30; Gal 2:16; and Eph 2:10. Of the approximately 350 passages listed in the Scripture index, most are only cited once and only a handful receive more than three citations.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> John F. Hart, “Does Philippians 1:6 Guarantee Progressive Sanctification?” *JOTGES* (Spring and Autumn 1996). Hart doesn’t clearly identify the day of Jesus Christ as the Bema until the conclusion of Part 2 (p. 59) where he says, “Their good work would result in a full reward at the Bema, the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 John 8).” Earlier in the article he refers to that day simply as “the parousia.”

final judgment.<sup>19</sup> However, Paul is again, as in v 6, expressing his desire that the Philippian believers persevere in good works *till the Bema* so that they would have a good experience in that judgment.

### C. PHILIPPIANS 2:16

The apostle urges his readers to be “holding fast the word of life, so *that I may rejoice in the day of Christ* that I have not run in vain or labored in vain” (emphasis added). Here the emphasis is on Paul’s experience at the Bema. Only if those who disciplined hold fast to the word of life will he receive maximum reward for the work he did among them. Paul is clearly not concerned about his eternal destiny here.<sup>20</sup> He is concerned about his eternal reward.

### D. SECOND THESSALONIANS 2:2

The Majority Text reading here is *the day of Christ*, as opposed to the Critical Text reading, *the day of the Lord*. While the difference this makes in interpretation in this context is not as great as in the others we have considered, it does matter. If the Bema had already occurred and these believers had missed it, then that would mean that they would not be rewarded for their labors. In Paul’s theology that would be a tragedy. Our labors for the Lord will be rewarded at the Bema.

Also notice that v 1 concerns “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ *and our gathering together to Him*” (emphasis added). When will church-age believers be gathered together to the Lord Jesus? The Rapture is surely in view. And the Bema is closely linked to the Rapture.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For example, see Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 69. He speaks of being “pure and blameless in preparation for the day of eschatological testing (Rom. 2:16).”

<sup>20</sup> Martin, *Philippians*, 122, sees Paul of speaking here of “the final day of reckoning.” While he doesn’t identify this as the Bema, or as for believers only, he does indicate that Paul was concerned “that his work may pass the test of the day of Christ and be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:13-14).”

<sup>21</sup> Second Thessalonians does not have any explicit references to the Bema except this one. However, see 3:13, “But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.” This is almost identical to Gal 6:9, a Bema passage (though the word is not used there or elsewhere in Galatians).

## IV. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

### 1 JOHN 4:17

There is also a use of the word *day* that is not specifically modified by Christ, Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus, or Lord Jesus Christ. It is the expression *the day of judgment* (*tē hēmera tēs kriseōs*).

This expression occurs 7 times in the NT.

It is used four times in Matthew and twice in Peter, where it always refers to the Great White Throne Judgment (Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:7).

The lone use of this expression by John in 1 John 4:17 refers to the Judgment Seat of Christ. Believers “may have boldness in *the day of judgment*” (emphasis added) if we are in this world as He is; that is, if we are loving people. However, most commentators understand this *day of judgment* as a reference to a generic final judgment in which the eternal destiny of people is determined.<sup>22</sup>

Hodges comments on this expression are quite helpful:

There is no such thing as a judgment for the saved to determine their destiny in heaven or hell, since that is already settled (cf. John 5:24; Romans 8:31-34). But Christians will give an accounting of their Christian lives at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

It is clear, however, that the Judgment Seat of Christ should not be thought of as simply some kind of great awards celebration. After speaking of the fact that “we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10), Paul goes on to say, “Knowing, therefore, *the terror* [Greek: *phobos*, fear] of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11, italics added). In another place, Paul states that our works “will be revealed by fire,” and that “the fire will test each one’s

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, most commentators assume that everyone understands what this expression means. See I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 222-25; Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John: Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 51 (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 258 (note: Smalley does devote a paragraph to discuss the day of judgment; however, the paragraph is designed to reject Bultmann’s suggestion that these words were the words of a redactor and not of John); John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John: Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, 1988), 171-73.

work, of what sort it is.” The possibility is held out that “if anyone’s work is burned [Greek = burned *up*], he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3:13, 15). And John himself, standing in the presence of the Lord Jesus and seeing Him as God’s appointed Judge, “fell at His feet as dead” (Revelation 1:17).

In light of these Scriptures, the Judgment Seat of Christ must be viewed as utterly solemn and potentially productive of fear. Even a transformed believer, who knows he is in no danger of hell, will be capable of feeling the fear which the presence of God always produces in those with holy sensibilities. We forget the awesomeness and majesty of Jesus Christ our Lord if we think otherwise.<sup>23</sup>

## V. THE DAY OR THAT DAY

The word *hēmera* is used a lot in the NT. I count 387 NT uses. Far and away most of these refer to either to a 24-hour day or to the daylight hours (as opposed to night). On some occasions it refers to years (Luke 1:7, 18) or even to eternity future (2 Pet 3:18).

The expression *the day of the Lord* actually doesn’t occur often in the NT. There are only 2 direct references to *the day of the Lord* in the entire NT (1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Pet 3:10). In addition there are approximately 21 allusions to that time of judgment simply referring to *that day* or *the day* (Matt 24:19, 22 [twice], 29, 36, 50; 25:13; Mark 13:17, 19, 20 [twice], 24, 32; Luke 17:24, 26, 30, 31; 21:22, 23, 34; 1 Thess 5:4).

I have identified five unmodified uses of *hemera* that definitely refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ and four others that might. All of the five definite references are in Paul’s writings, two in First Corinthians and three in Second Timothy.

### A. FIRST CORINTHIANS 3:13

This passage starts in v 5. Paul is using himself and Apollos (3:5-6ff) as examples of faithful workers, “God’s fellow workers” (3:9). Then he discusses the future judgment by Christ of their works (3:10-15). Paul says that each one’s work will become clear; *for the Day will declare it*, because it will be revealed by fire...” (emphasis added).

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<sup>23</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God’s Love* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 199-200.

“The Day” here is clearly *the Day* when believers will be judged by Christ, the Judgment Seat of Christ. However, that is not the way that most commentators understand this. They assume this refers to a time of final judgment when the eternal destiny of people is determined.<sup>24</sup>

#### B. FIRST CORINTHIANS 4:3

The word *Day* is not even found in most English translations of this verse, even though *hēmera* is used by Paul. The NKJV reads, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court [lit., “day”, *hēmera*].” Other translations that render *hēmera* here as *court* include the NIV, NASB, TNIV, HCSB (which has a footnote that reads, “lit. *a human day*”), RSV, and the NET Bible.

I think this is an unfortunate translation choice. If the English reader saw the expression *a human day* here, he would realize that day in the NT sometimes refer to a time of judgment.

Paul concludes this paragraph in vv 4-5. There he makes it clear that “He who judges me is the Lord” when He comes. Clearly Paul is speaking of the Bema. The contrast is between a *human day* and a *divine Day*, Jesus’ Day. Paul came out on the wrong side of some human days. That didn’t concern him. What did concern the apostle is that he would be found faithful—“it is required in stewards that one be found faithful”—by the Lord Jesus at His Day.

Charles Hodge has an excellent discussion of *a human day* and of the entire passage up to v 5. Then he says, “*Until the Lord comes...i.e., until the second advent of Christ, which in the New Testament is constantly represented as contemporaneous with the resurrection of the dead and the*

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<sup>24</sup> As an aside, I feel that the meaning of v 15 has been missed. In light of 1 Cor 5:5, which uses the word *to save* (*swzein*) to refer to being spiritually healthy at the Bema, the same fits perfectly here (and, in my opinion, in all uses of *swzein* in First Corinthians). “If anyone’s [that is, any faithful minister’s, like himself or Apollos] work is burned [up], he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved [will be spiritually healthy at the Bema], yet so as through fire.” It would make no sense for Paul to say that even if some of the works of a servant of Christ are burned up, he will remain eternally secure. The salvation here is Bema-related. Paul’s point is that we should not fear that since some of our works will be found to have been perishable (impermanent) that we will thus not be approved by Christ (cf. 1 Cor 9:27).

general judgment.”<sup>25</sup> Commentators for some reason do not distinguish between the judgment of believers at the Bema and unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment.<sup>26</sup>

### C. SECOND TIMOTHY 1:12

Here is a famous verse that has been famously misunderstood as a declaration of eternal security. There is a wonderful song based on this verse, though it unfortunately misinterprets it. If we carefully observed the reference to *that Day*, we wouldn't make that mistake.

Paul said, “I know whom I have believed [the Lord Jesus] and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him [or, what He committed to me] *until that Day* [the Bema]” (emphasis added).

Guthrie's comments are helpful here:

The words *what I have entrusted to him* represent an expression (*paratheke mou*) which literally means ‘my deposit’...The ‘deposit’ could be understood either of what God entrusted to Paul or what Paul entrusted to God, but since in the other occurrences in the Pastorals the word *paratheke* is used in the former sense, it is most probably used in the same sense here. In that case the reference is to the work which the apostle was commissioned to do or the doctrine entrusted to him.<sup>27</sup>

All of his service for Christ was based on the fact that Jesus promised to reward him with heightened opportunity for serving Jesus in eternity if he was faithful with what Jesus had entrusted to him in this life. While included in “I know whom I have believed” is the idea of his secure eternal destiny, that is in the background. In the foreground in Jesus' promise that those who serve Him faithfully to the end of their lives will

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d., reprinted in 1980), 67-68, italics his; underlining added.

<sup>26</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 77-74, also has a fine discussion of this passage. Yet in his discussion of v 4 he speaks of “the final judgment” being in view in vv 4-5 (p. 73).

<sup>27</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles, Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 144. For a fuller discussion of both views, see D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Timothy: Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 43. Hiebert also sees Paul as referring to what the Lord Jesus entrusted to him, ultimately the gospel itself.

rule with Him forever. *That Day* is a clear reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ here and in its other two uses in Second Timothy.<sup>28</sup>

Hiebert is one of the few commentators that actually mentions the Bema directly when discussing this verse: “‘Against that day’ looks forward to that future day when Paul will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive his reward for his Gospel labors.”<sup>29</sup>

#### D. SECOND TIMOTHY 1:18

Onesiphorus was a man who aided Paul often during his second Roman imprisonment (vv 16-17). As a result, Paul expects that he will “find mercy from the Lord *in that Day*” (emphasis added). Clearly Paul has the Bema in view and he has a strong desire that those who aided him in his ministry would have a good experience there.

#### E. SECOND TIMOTHY 4:8

The interpretation of 2 Tim 1:12, 18 is confirmed by a comparison of those verses with 2 Tim 4:6-8. There Paul says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me *on that Day*, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing” (emphasis added). Note the inclusion of *that Day* in all three places in 2 Timothy.

#### F. PASSAGES TO PONDER

There are four other uses of *hēmera* that might refer to the Bema, though I am not yet convinced. These verses are on my radar to continue thinking over.

In John 8:56 the Lord says that “Abraham rejoiced to see *My day*” (emphasis added). Is He referring to the Bema specifically, or to His return and establishment of His kingdom in general? There isn’t enough context to answer that question definitively. At least that is how it appears to me at this time. Since Hebrews 11 points out that Abraham was looking for future reward, that might tip the scales that the Bema is in view here as well. You will note that the NKJV didn’t capitalize *day* here, evidently not feeling that the Bema was in view. I wonder.

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<sup>28</sup> After his excellent discussion cited above, Guthrie (144-45) is very vague as to what *that Day* refers here and in its other two uses in Second Timothy. While there is nothing objectionable in his discussion of *that Day*, it would be so helpful if he would explicitly refer to the Bema.

<sup>29</sup> Hiebert, *Second Timothy*, 44.

In the Upper Room Discourse Jesus said, “*At that day* you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you” (John 14:2, emphasis added). I tend to think this refers generally to Jesus’ return and kingdom reign. However, in light of the other NT uses of *hēmera*, it is certainly possible that the Lord is specifically alluding to the Bema here.

What did Paul mean in Rom 13:12 when he said, “The night is far spent, *the day is at hand*” (emphasis added)? Clearly the night is this sinful evil age. Thus *the day* would seem to be a reference to the righteous kingdom of the Lord Jesus which is soon to dawn. In light of the fact that in this very verse Paul goes on to say, “Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light,” it seems that the Bema is at least in the background of this reference to *the day*.

The final possible reference is Heb 10:25, a very famous text. We are to exhort one another as we assemble together in church, “and so much the more *as you see the Day approaching*” (emphasis added). This strikes me as being highly likely to be a direct reference to the Bema. While it could be general reference to the Lord’s return, the reason for urgency is the imminent return of Christ brings with it our judgment at the Bema. I have not included it with the other references only because I wished to reserve those for references where the context made it crystal clear that the Bema was in view.

## VI. CONCLUSION

More work needs to be done on this vital topic. This would be a great topic for a thesis or a dissertation. In the meantime, whenever you see *the day of the Lord Jesus, the day of Jesus Christ, the day of Christ, or the day of the Lord Jesus Christ*, realize that the Bema is specifically in view. Whenever you see *that Day*, think Bema. Whenever you see *the day*, realize that the Bema might be in view. At least consider it is a possibility.

The single most important day in any of our lives is the day we believed in the Lord Jesus for everlasting life. The very next most important day for us in all of human history will be *that Day, the Day of the Lord Jesus*, the Bema. That Day will determine how fully we will serve and glorify the Lord Jesus forever. What we do for the rest of our lives until *that Day* is vital to our eternal experience.

Live each day now in light of *that Day*. The Doctrine of the Day is a key proof that grace theology is not in any way a license to sin and waste one’s present life.

