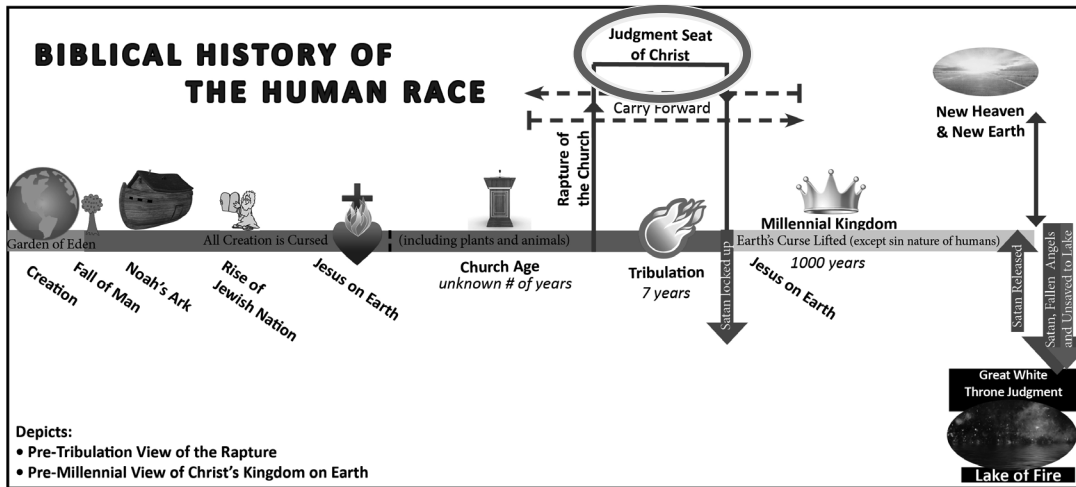


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WE HAVE ARRIVED!

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See page 179 toolbox for full-page image.

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: the Bema (JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST)

WHAT IS A "BEMA"?

A Bema was a raised platform used in ancient Greek culture for judges to preside over sporting events much like the Olympic games. At the time of the writing of the New Testament the Isthmian games would have been a regular occurrence. The judge sitting on the Bema would **watch the competition, ensure the rules were followed and award prizes to the victors** immediately after the competition.

Although the word "bema" is not specifically mentioned in Scripture, its concept of evaluation and reward is core to its application in the Bible. No doubt, the early church was very familiar with bemas.

*¹⁰For we must all appear before **the judgment seat of Christ**, so that **each of us** may receive what is due **us** for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10*

¹⁰... For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹It is written:

On that day when we stand before Jesus, our past will reveal our future.

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*“As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”*

¹²*So then, **each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.** Romans 14:10c, 11-12*

¹²*If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,
¹³**their work will be shown for what it is,** because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. ¹⁴**If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.** ¹⁵**If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.**
1 Corinthians 3:12-15*

The pages of the New Testament are filled with information about this future event and the consequences of doing well or poorly there. The results and repercussions of this Bema/Judgment Seat event will be discussed more fully in Chapters 6 and 7.

FACING THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

²⁷*Just as people (all men) are destined _____
_____, and after that to _____
_____, Hebrews 9:27*

While it is popular to think that believers won’t face judgment, that simply isn’t true. Just as the Scripture says ... all men... **judgment is part of the human experience for everyone.** BUT there are two judgment seats which are different in many ways:

- 1. The Great White Throne Judgment** is for unbelievers who are judged/tried for their sins **(after or at the end of the Millennial Kingdom).** Since unbelievers reject Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross as punishment for their sins, they will be tried and appropriately dealt with for their deeds

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during their lifetime. Note that there are gradations or levels in hell/the Lake of Fire just like there are in heaven. But that's another topic for another time.

2. The Judgment Seat of Christ (aka the Bema) is for believers (**this occurs in heaven between the Rapture and the Second Coming**). Jesus willingly accepted God's righteous judgment and punishment for the sins of humanity (propitiation) when He died on the cross 2000+ years ago (*For the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23*). God accepted His payment in full as evidenced by His resurrection and place in heaven. As believers, we have acknowledged our need for and accepted his gracious gift of salvation, receiving a pardon from God as a result. (Exchanged life: His righteousness for our sinfulness.)

So, what is left for us to be judged for? We will be judged and given rewards/mistos (or have a lack of rewards) **for the way we've lived our lives since the day of our salvation**. We will not be judged for the time between our first birth and our second birth (neither positively nor negatively), but for how we have lived after our second birth since we became "new creatures" at that time.

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ (that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior), he is a new creature (reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit); 2 Corinthians 5:17
AMP

The way we conduct ourselves **post-salvation is our way of honoring Him** in response to His death on the cross in our place. The final judgment for the believer will occur when we stand before Christ to have **our fidelity, loyalty and service judged**, and the appropriate reward conferred.

¹²"Look, I am coming soon! _____ is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done."
Revelation 22:12

NOTES**WHO WILL ATTEND THE BEMA EVENT?**

John Newton, the former slave trader who wrote *Amazing Grace* is attributed with a saying about what might be his reaction when he first arrives in heaven.

He expects to be surprised by three things:

1. "Seeing many people there **who I had not expected to be there.**
2. "**Not finding many church-goers there**, who I had expected to be there.
- 3." The greatest surprise of all - that an old slaver like **myself would be there at all**, by God's grace."

Of course this is not meant to be literal, but we are warned not to pre-judge who will be there and who won't, that is Jesus' job. He decides who is permitted into His Kingdom and what positions we will hold there.

⁵ *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; _____ until the Lord comes. _____ will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the _____ of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. 1 Corinthians 4:5*

That being said, 2 Corinthians 5:10 (previously quoted) was part of a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Church at Corinth but is intended for all Church-age Believers. "We - all" means **all Church-age Believers**. The first "members" of the Church were those in attendance at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit 'filled" them. **If you truly put your faith in Christ as Savior** on or after that day and either died before the Rapture or are part of the Rapture, you'll be there to participate in the Bema event.

Note that the Apostle Paul was at one time an enemy of the Church but was saved after that Pentecost and is now dead. He will be one of the "dead in Christ who rise first" at the Rapture. Likewise, Peter,

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James, John, Mary ... all of them ... will be at the Bema right alongside us.

I realize that the names listed here are Jewish believers so some may say, “they are ‘different from Gentile believers’” – and that will likely be the case in some ways during the Millennial and Eternal Kingdom eras. But since Paul was a Jew and uses the term “we,” he obviously includes himself in the participants at the Judgment Seat of Christ/Bema that immediately follows the Rapture.

As I understand it, there will be others there to watch/witness but not participate in this event:

- the Holy Angels will be there to watch.

They will be first-hand witnesses to the grace and mercy of God as they watch the ceremony unfold. ⁸ *I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.*
Luke 12:8

- The Old Testament Saints will be there too,** but not in resurrected bodies as the time for that to occur is just a bit later. John the Baptist was the last Old Testament Prophet. He will be there as a spectator/witness, not a part of the raptured Church even though he knew Jesus and believed Him to be the Son of God. He died before Jesus did, and before May 25, 33 AD. He is part of the Old Testament Saints group. (See *The Order of Resurrection & New Bodies* in the toolbox.)

WHAT COULD THE REWARD CEREMONY LOOK LIKE

THE REWARDS CEREMONY IMAGINED

Go back to the Prelude of this study guide to review the “story” told there.

Take a few minutes to discuss this story. How does it

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compare to what you think it will be like? If you wish, you may also take the time to look up each of the Scriptures presented there and discuss them with the group at this time. My “vision/story” doesn’t matter, what the Scriptures reveal about that day does.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer says, “In the presence of Christ, we will be oblivious to those who are around us. The expression on His face will tell it all. The judgment will be very ‘up close and personal,’ but also public.”¹ The “look on Jesus’ face” will likely be **mixed for everyone**. I suspect that there will be both looks of joy and happiness and looks of disappointment on His face for every one of us. This will be covered more thoroughly in a later chapter.

It is my belief that we will all watch each other’s Bema presentation so we will see and know why each person is in the position they earn. It will also **give us a chance to share in the joy of the Master as He demonstrates His generosity and love for the Saints**. It makes sense to me that Jesus would find great joy in showing all of His followers and His Holy Angels **how much each one served Him** during their lifetime.

It will be a time of great joy for Jesus as He honors and thanks the “soldiers” under His command for their loyalty and service. Think about it. Wouldn’t it be great to be able to see the “movie” of the Apostle Paul’s life of loyalty and service and see Jesus reward him accordingly? How about Mary, His earthly mother’s life? What about the joy of watching someone you love receive commendation from our Lord?



Make a list of a few people’s Bema reward ceremony you are looking forward to watching here:

HOW LONG WE WILL STAY IN HEAVEN?

I believe we will be there about seven “earth years,” maybe a little longer. I say “about” because there is

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no way of knowing how long the interval of time will be between the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation. I suspect it won't be long, but I know no Scriptural basis for this.

I doubt that it will seem like seven years. It is my belief that heaven operates outside time as we know it.

FINAL EVENT IN HEAVEN AT THIS TIME –

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB CEREMONY

The final event that will occur in heaven before we return to the earth is the **Marriage Ceremony of the Lamb (Christ, the Bridegroom)** to the Church (His Bride). [See Author's Note on page 40.]

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says, **"The marriage ceremony will take place after the judgment of Christ, when the Saints are rewarded for their deeds on earth** (I Corinthians 3:10-15). All the wood, hay and stubble will have been burned away, and all the gold, silver and precious stones will have been purified. This corresponds to the ritual cleansing of the Jewish wedding system. The ones present at the marriage ceremony are the "few," that is, only those in heaven at that time."²

This will, no doubt, be the most magnificent event that has occurred to date. Can you even begin to imagine its splendor, its majesty? Who will be there? The Godhead themselves as Jesus is the Bridegroom, the Church that has been cleansed and prepared for her role as the Bride, the Old Testament Saints and all the Holy Angels. It takes my breath away to even try to image the beauty of it all.

⁶ *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:*

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

⁷ *Let us rejoice and be glad*

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The bride at a Galilean wedding made her own wedding garments while she waited for her future husband to return for her. We are, in a sense, making our own wedding garments in our lives here today as we wait for the Rapture.

*and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has _____
_____.⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear. Revelation 19:6-8*

(*Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

I find the words "and his bride has made herself ready" nearly identical in all translations. It seems to me that this means that when we first get to heaven we will stand before Jesus and have our "deeds" judged, the "worthless" ones will burn up so to speak and be gone as if they never existed, and the "good ones" will remain with us. This is the purification process that we will undergo. Since the worthless ones are gone, it leaves us ready to wear the "*fine linen, bright and clean*" To make ourselves ready is to work diligently toward earning rewards (ones that remain).

According to Paul Benware, "The garments represent the rewards. The fact that the Bride is wearing her beautiful garments indicates that she has already received her rewards for her deeds of righteousness."³

The most incredible thing about the Marriage Ceremony will be that at that moment "we are going to know Christ – really know Him – for the first time."⁴

AUTHOR'S NOTE: There are very educated and knowledgeable Bible scholars who disagree about **the timing of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.** Will it occur as the last event in heaven or the first celebratory event on earth at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom? I have researched and read good arguments for each position. It appears that most agree that the **Wedding Ceremony takes place "in the Father's House" as would be customary,** the disagreement comes about the celebration/supper afterwards.

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I have decided not to overly concern myself with this timing question. I am far more concerned about getting myself ready as part of the Bride. I have, therefore, presented it from what I learned from a Messianic Jewish Scholar, Dr. Arnold Fructenbaum.

I say, "Let the celebration be where and when it is supposed to be – His Will be done."

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON EARTH

WHILE WE ARE IN HEAVEN?

The disappearance of millions or even billions of people, all at the same time and in the same way, will traumatize people around the globe and cause severe emotional, economic and physical damage everywhere. Additionally, many of the people (Believers) who disappear in the Rapture will be at work in that moment, some at jobs where their presence is critical.

For example, what do you think will happen to the plane and passengers if the pilot and co-pilot of an airplane both disappear simultaneously? Or how about the thousands of 18-wheel truck drivers, poof gone! – in an instant. Think about surgeons in the middle of a difficult surgery or someone operating a nuclear power plant.

All jobs are important and the loss of the people performing them will be problematic for those who remain. The loss of some will be catastrophic at the moment of the Rapture.

As far as I can tell, most theologians agree that **many, if not all, children will be raptured**, not because they are "innocent of sin" but **because they haven't attained sufficient mental maturity to be able to decide if they wish to accept the gift of salvation** the Lord offers. Some think that only children of believers will be raptured, I don't know. I suspect that this "exception" would apply to anyone, regardless of age,

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who lacks the mental capacity/maturity to truly decide. There are some adults (chronologically adults) in this situation. **I know the One Who makes these decisions and He is right and just in every decision He makes.** I am happy to leave it in His capable hands.

The sheer “loss” of leaders and loved ones of so many people will be devastating. I believe that this alone will throw the world into sufficient chaos that will lead fairly quickly into a global power shift and world-wide wars (Revelation 6:1-8), creating a leadership void that the Antichrist will be most eager to fill.

This cunning one-world leader will emerge, triggering the seven years of Tribulation on our planet foretold by John in Revelation chapters 6-18 and by the Prophet Daniel:

²⁷He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven. Daniel 9:27

Even though we, the believing Church, won't be here to experience the harrowing events that unfold like tsunami waves over the earth during those seven years (thanks be to our Lord!), many of our friends and families will be.

We should do everything we can to warn them before it's too late. Consider purchasing from Amazon or downloading the free booklet ***After the Rapture*** from www.bemabuilders.org to read, study, discuss with others. At the very least, leave one in a conspicuous place so that people you care about will have a chance to know what has “happened” to you (where you are and why) and perhaps come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during the Tribulation as a result. Write a personal hand-written note to each person you think might not be saved. If they are saved, they will be with the rest of us in heaven and won't know the note exists. If they aren't saved and find it later after we are gone, they may be more likely to read the booklet and contemplate the “salvation offer.” Note that His salvation offer will exist throughout the Tribulation.

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There are no rapture events during the Tribulation period, however, so being saved (putting their faith in Christ Jesus) won't instantly remove them from the earth, but **it will save them from the Lake of Fire as their final destination**. Many **new believers** will likely die fairly soon after the onset of the Tribulation period, so perhaps their time of suffering will be reasonably short. Not my decision.

OUR RETURN TO EARTH

WHO IS MAKING THIS TRIP BACK TO EARTH WITH JESUS?

The Scriptures indicate that **only the Raptured Believers** (Church Age believers who are now part of **the Wife/Bride of Christ**) and the Holy Angels will initially accompany Jesus back to earth for the Battle at Armageddon and the Separation of the Sheep and Goats event.

The Martyred Tribulation Saints and the Old Testament Saints will follow shortly thereafter. They will no doubt have their own Judgment Seat event and receive their new bodies before their return to the earth during the 75-day interlude. If you know of Scriptures that say otherwise, feel free to discuss them with your group.

THE 75-DAY INTERLUDE

The 75-day Interlude **between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom** was foretold by the Prophet Daniel in Daniel 12. The second half of the Tribulation is declared to be 42 months (or 1,260 days or 3½ years) long, then there will be an additional 75 days (30 + 45) for certain events to occur. Take the time to read Daniel 9 and 12 to see how this is stated there.

Many things will occur on earth during this 75-day period including **three major events**: The Battle at Armageddon, the Separation of the Sheep and Goats event and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Note that the Marriage Supper **may be** the last event of the 75-day interlude but most likely will be the first

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major event of the Millennial Kingdom as it will be major celebration. I don't know its exact timing. (See Author's note on page 40.)

THE BATTLE AT ARMAGEDDON

(correctly spelled Har-Magedon)

The Tribulation Period will climax in one of the greatest wars in the history of the world commonly known as **The Battle at Armageddon**. This is actually a multi-year war culminating in a battle at this location. That is what is being referred to here. With their leaders under the influence of the demons of Satan, all the existing non-Jewish nations of the world will be involved in the battle in some way. This does not mean that every person on the earth at that time will be there – many (*both saved and unsaved*) will NOT be there and will be dealt with later in the 75-day interlude period (*the Separation of the Sheep and Goats event*). **This battle will be led by the Antichrist with the intent on the final destruction of Israel.**

¹⁴They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

*¹⁶Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.
Revelation 16:14, 16*

Just when it seems like all is lost for Israel, Jesus will appear and destroy the hostile forces of the Antichrist.

*²I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.
Zechariah 14:2*

¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called _____ and _____. With justice he judges and _____. ¹²His eyes are

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like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns (diadems). He has a name written on him that no one knows but _____.

¹³He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵Coming out of his mouth is a _____ with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule [or shepherd] them with an iron scepter." He treads the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Revelation 19:11-16

Our Lord will speak the victory and will deliver His brethren (the Jews). We will be there to witness it first-hand as prophesied by Enoch:

*¹⁴Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones
Jude 14*

Dr. David Jeremiah says, "**All who have died in the Lord**, along with **those who were raptured before the years of the Tribulation** will join with the Lord and participate in the battle to reclaim the world for the rule of Christ. He [Jesus] **will be joined by His angels**. Jesus Himself told us, '*But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.*' Matthew 25:31 NASB"¹⁵

Although the armies against Him will have no chance of defeating Him (He will speak and it will be done), this doesn't mean that the bloodshed won't be massive.

¹⁷And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to _____ flying in midair, "Come, gather together for

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the great supper of God, ¹⁸so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small."

*¹⁹Then I saw _____
and the _____
_____ and _____
_____ gathered together to wage war
against the rider on the horse and his army.
Revelation 19:17-19*

Bottom line of this battle: Jesus will return to the earth with the Church and holy angels. He will slay the wicked by the word of His mouth and bind Satan for a thousand years. There is so much more that could be said about this battle and this time in history, but it isn't the focus of this study so we will move on for now.

The earth will be a mess. Satan, the Antichrist and False Prophet will have wreaked havoc on the earth during the Tribulation period but that will be NOTHING compared to damage inflicted by God as He pours out His wrath against sin. The carnage of humans, animals, plants, etc. will be tremendous. A lot of clean-up will be required. No doubt, some of it will be done supernaturally. But some may be done by the then inhabitants of the earth.

THE SEPARATION OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS EVENT

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the _____ will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people _____ [individually, each one alone] as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his _____ and the goats on his _____.

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left,

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' _____, you who are cursed,
into the _____ prepared for the
devil and his angels.

⁴⁶“Then they will go away to eternal
_____, but the righteous to eternal
life.” Matthew 25:31-33, 41, 46

*nations (this means Gentiles, not nations like
“countries” – it is non-Jewish individuals)

This will be the separation of **the remaining gentile survivors of the Tribulation**. (Note that the Jewish survivors of the Tribulation are handled separately.) The issue here concerns eternal life and eternal damnation for people who are either believers or unbelievers. This will occur in the Valley of Jehoshaphat at the site of the end of the Armageddon campaign.

The foundation of this judgment will be **anti-Semitism** and **pro-Semitism**. Individual gentiles will be judged based on their treatment of the Messiah's brethren (the Jewish people), during the Tribulation period. **The sheep, who are pro-Semites**, are clearly stated to be **the righteous ones. They will NOT be saved because of their pro-Semitism**. This cannot be, for that would mean their salvation was based on works. Rather, it is a demonstration of **proving one's faith by one's works** (James 2:14-26). Because these gentiles believe in Jesus, they will refuse to join the Antichrist's attempt to destroy the Jews. These gentiles will do what they can to help the Jews during the Tribulation period. And, because they are saved, they will be invited to enter the Millennial Kingdom and are the ones who will populate the gentile nations at the beginning of the millennium.

The Anti-Semites will join the ranks of the persecutors of the Jews under the Antichrist's authority. They are non-believers and will be killed by Jesus in their unbelief.

Now God has used the Tribulation, Battle at Armageddon, and the Sheep and Goats judgment to temporarily purge godless rebellion from the earth, thus ushering in the Millennial Reign of Christ.

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v5 is referring to unsaved people who will be resurrected after the millennium to face the Great White Throne Judgment.

RESURRECTION OF OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS AND TRIBULATION SAINTS

Before returning to earth the Old Testament Saints need to be resurrected and given their new bodies just like the Church (dead in Christ) received theirs at the Rapture.

Likewise, the deceased Tribulation Saints have not, at this point in time, been resurrected. These verses come right after the ones that describe Satan being locked up in the Abyss at the end of the Tribulation period. We can clearly identify them because of the reference to the mark of the beast.

^{4b}And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Revelation 20:4b-5

*⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those **who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**" And he added, "These are the true words of God." Revelation 19:9a*

See *Order of Resurrections & New Bodies* in the toolbox.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

While the **marriage ceremony** will take place in heaven just before the second coming, **the marriage supper will take place on earth after the second coming** (when Jesus and His new Bride/Wife return to the earth). It would seem that the marriage feast is what initiates the Messianic Kingdom; the church's co-

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reigning with the Messiah will start with a tremendous feast/celebration. (See Author's Note on page 40.)

"The Old Testament Saints are **'the friends of the bridegroom'** and are invited/bidden to attend the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. John the Baptist, who was **the last of the Hebrew prophets**, called himself a friend of the bridegroom and did not consider himself to be a member of the church/bride (John 3:27-30)"⁶, and will not be included in the Raptured "dead in Christ." He will be resurrected along with the other Old Testament Saints even though he knew Jesus personally and believed He is the Son of God.



Can you think of a few reasons why a person would be considered "blessed" to be invited to this wedding celebration?

Chapters Four and Five will go into detail about the next age, **the Millennial Kingdom**, then circle back around to the Bema and the impact it will have on our personal lives during the millennium.

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UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

1. Did you apply anything new you learned from Lesson 2? What was it, how did you apply it? What difference, if any, resulted?

2. Were you aware of the two different judgment seats presented in this chapter?
_____ Did you know that believers were going to “face” a judgment (be held accountable for their lives after their salvation day)? _____ What difference does that make to your life today, if any?

3. How does what was presented in this chapter compare to your prior thinking about “when we get to heaven”?

Are you considering any changes in your thinking after being presented with the Scriptures in this chapter? Why or why not?

4. Name one thing you learned in this chapter that will be beneficial in the days ahead. How will you apply it (be specific)?