

## Doctrine of the Bema

### Introduction

1. At the judgment seat of Christ, or the **Bema** (as it is called in the Greek), crowns will be awarded.

1.1 The **Bema** was a place where a king, judge or procurator might sit to adjudicate a matter or reward an outstanding athlete or military hero. It is from the **Bema** that the judge would issue punishments or rewards.

1.2 It was at the **Bema**, during the Isthmus Games, that a winning contestant received his special reward called a **Stephanos**.

1.2.1 It is to this analogy the New Testament speaks when it describes Church Age believers appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.

Rom 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

1.3 The word **Bema** appears several places in the New Testament.

1.3.1 Jesus was brought before Pilate's **Bema**.

Mat 27:19 When he was set down on the "**judgment seat**", his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Joh 19:13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the "**judgment seat**" in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

1.3.2 Herod Agrippa made his final speech from a **Bema**. Acts 12:21.

Acts 12:21 And upon a set day Herod Agrippa, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his "**throne**", and made an oration unto them.

1.3.3 Gallio, the governor of Achaia, judged Paul from a **Bema**.

Acts 18:16 And he drave them from the "**judgment seat**."

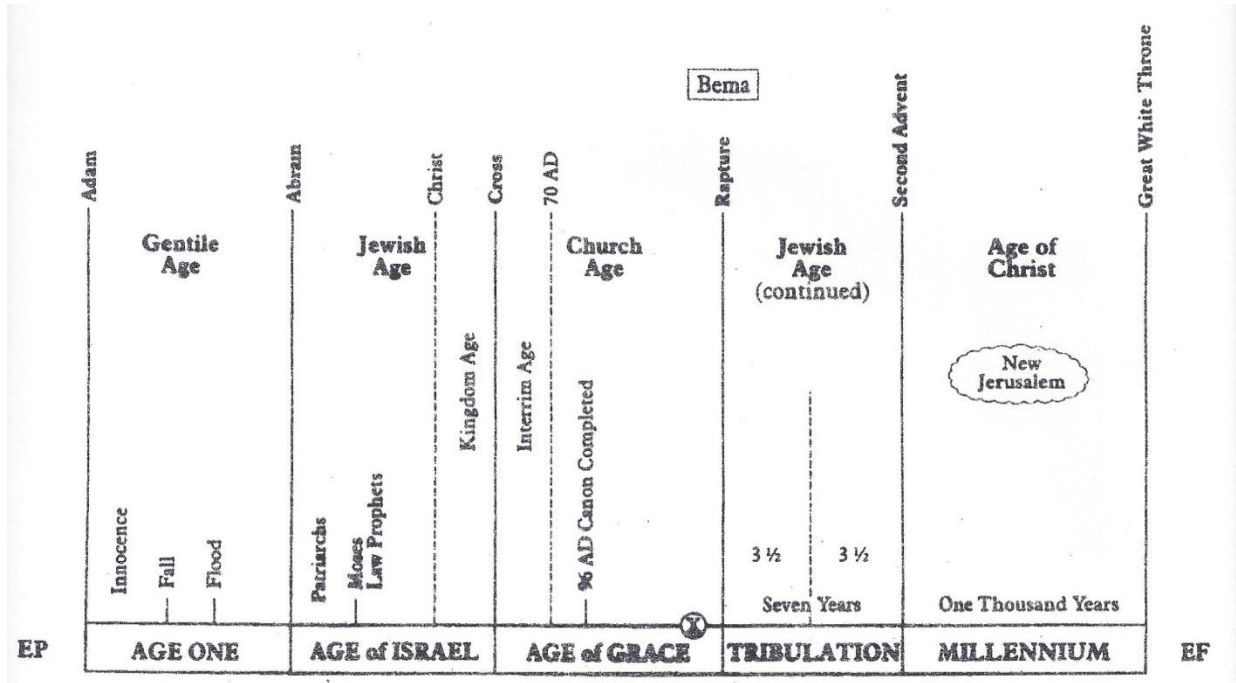
1.3.4 Paul was brought before a **Bema** (the judgment seat of Festus) on his way to Rome.

Acts 25:6 And when Festus had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the "**judgment seat**" commanded Paul to be brought ...

Acts 25:10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's "**judgment seat**", where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest ...

Definition and Concept

1. Let's look at crowns as they relate to the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment is for believers of the Church Age. It takes place just after the Rapture. The judgment seat is called the **Bema**.



2. Paul describes the events taking place at the **Bema**, where crowns are awarded, in 1Co 3:11-15.

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.  
 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;  
 1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.  
 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.  
 1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

3. The word for crown in the New Testament is **Stephanos**. The **Stephanos** in ancient Rome was a wreath given to both athletes and military heroes who had distinguished themselves.

3.1 With it went a large monetary stipend, a parade honoring the recipient (much like a ticker-tape parade for the team winning the World Series), a significant land grant such as 1000 acres on the Brazos between Waco and Bryan and a lifetime exemption from taxation for self and family.

3.1.1 Your right pastor-teacher will be with you at the **Bema**, for it is his evaluation too.

Phi 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and **crown**, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

1Th 2:19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the **crown** in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

1Th 2:20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

4. The word **Stephanos** appears in Scripture to describe:

- Jesus' crown of thorns

Mat 27:29 And when they had platted a "**crown**" of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

- something of value

1Co 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible "**crown**;" but we an incorruptible.

Phi 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and "**crown**", that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

1Th 2:19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the "**crown**" in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

2Ti 4:8 Now there is in store for me the "**crown**" of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the "**crown**" of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Rev 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you (church at Smyrna - 100-300 A.D.), and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the "**crown**" of life.

1Pe 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the "**crown**" of glory that will never fade away.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon to you, the church at Philadelphia - the church just before the rapture). Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your "**crown**".

- the church resident in heaven--casting their crowns before the throne of God

Rev 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had "**crowns**" of gold on their heads.

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their "**crowns**" before the throne and say:

- power given the Antichrist

Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a "**crown**" was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

- demon warriors

Rev 9:6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

Rev 9:7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like "**crowns**" of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.

Rev 9:8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

- Israel divided into twelve tribes

Rev 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a "**crown**" of twelve stars:

- the royalty of Jesus just before He returns

Rev 14:14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a "**crown**" of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

5. In addition to the crowns awarded for divine good, there are special crowns awarded to believers of the Church Age.

- a crown of righteousness

2Ti 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2Ti 4:8 Now there is in store for me the **crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

5.1 Col. R. B. Thieme says of this crown, "It would seem to be available to those who have acquired enough doctrine to appreciate and anticipate the Rapture and the blessed events following."

5.2 The crown of righteousness is mentioned only once in Scripture where Paul speaks of his acquiring it because he anticipates his death at the hand of Nero.

- a crown of life

Rev 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the **crown** of life.

5.3 The crown of life is available to all believers who not only reach maturity but are able to hold that level even amid significant pressures.

5.4 There are those who see this crown as available only to believers of the Tribulation. This, however, flies in the face of the fact that in every age believers are deluged with pressure and testing from old Satan under the permissive will of God.

5.5 Its appropriateness for believers in all ages would seem to be strengthened by the fact that James mentions the crown of life.

Jam 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the **crown** of life that God has promised to those who love him.

- a crown of glory

5.6 The crown of glory is available only to the pastor-teacher who is faithful to the task of studying and teaching, both when it is convenient and when it is not convenient.

1Pe 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

1Pe 5:3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

1Pe 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the **crown** of glory that will never fade away.

6. Fittingly, in our new natures we are seen in heaven casting our **crowns** at the feet of Christ.

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their **crowns** before the throne and say:

Rev 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."