

1 Peter 1:17

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each one's work impartially, conduct yourselves in reverent fear during your stay as foreigners.

Berean Study Bible

¹⁷ Since you all call on a Father who judges each one's work impartially,
conduct yourselves in fear
during your sojourn.

My own translation

1

Judgement day is coming. 1 Peter 1:17

At the judgement. 1:17a

Who is the judge? "Father who judges"

What is judged? "judges each one's work"

How is it judged? "judges... impartially"

Before the judgement. 1:17b

My action. "conduct"

My attitude. "reverent fear"

Be appropriate. "stay as foreigners"

2

A look at the judgement. 1 Peter 1:17

Look over. "Father"

Look at. "work"

Look through. "impartially"

Look in. "conduct yourselves"

Look up. "reverent fear"

Look out. "foreigners"

3

Meet your judge. 1 Peter 1:17

I will be judged. 1:17a
I will be judged in love. "Father"
I will be judged individually. "each one"
I will be judged impartially. "impartially"

I must judge myself. 1:17b
I must judge my actions. "conduct"
I must judge my attitude. "reverent fear"
I must judge my relationships. "as foreigners"

4

Judgement Day begins today. 1 Peter 1:17

I will be judged tomorrow. 1:17a
I will be judged compassionately. "Father"
I will be judged personally. "each one"
I will be judged fairly. "impartially"

I must be judged today. 1:17b
I must judge my own actions. "conduct"
I must judge my own attitude. "reverent fear"
I must judge my own outlook. "as foreigners"

5

No escape. 1 Peter 1:17

The unavoidable exam. 1:17a
Judgement must come. "judges"
Judgement comes to all. "each one"
Judgment is evidence-based. "work"

The unpleasant reality. 1:17b
How does God assess my actions? "conduct"
Don't be afraid of fear. "in reverent fear"
What am I doing here? "as foreigners"

6

The joy of fear. 1 Peter 1:17

Who I fear. "you all call on a Father"
Why I fear. "He judges each one's work impartially"

Yes, I fear. "conduct yourselves in fear"
When I fear. "during your sojourn."

7

Be fearful, but not afraid. 1 Peter 1:17

Fear God, but don't be afraid of your Father. "you all call on a Father"
Fear the Judge, but don't be afraid of His judgment. "He judges each one's work impartially"
Fear failure, but don't be afraid to fail. "conduct yourselves in fear"
Fear time, but don't be afraid of eternity. "during your sojourn."

8

Are we there yet? 1 Peter 1:17

Why God does what He does. "you all call on a Father"
What God does and how He does it. "He judges each one's work impartially"
What I do, and how I do it. "conduct yourselves in fear"
How long does this take? "during your sojourn."

9

Are you afraid? You should be! 1 Peter 1:17

I should be afraid of disappointing God.
 I am in an eternal love relationship. "you all call on a Father"
 My behaviour will be assessed. "He judges each one's work impartially"

I should be afraid of disappointing myself.
 Adopt a short-term motivation. "conduct yourselves in fear"
 Accept a short-term viewpoint. "during your sojourn."

10

It's who you know. 1 Peter 1:17

What is your relationship with your Father? "you all call on a Father"
What is your relationship with your Judge? "judges each one's work"
What is your relationship with yourself? "conduct yourselves in fear"
What is your relationship with your world? "during your sojourn"

11

Two tasks for every believer. 1 Peter 1:17

I am to call. 1:17a “you call on a Father”

I am to call to my Father. “you all call on a Father”

I am to call to my Judge. “judges each one’s work impartially”

I am to conduct. 1:17b “conduct yourselves in fear”

I am to conduct myself in fear. “conduct yourselves in fear”

I am to conduct myself as temporary. “during your sojourn”

12

The fear factor. 1 Peter 1:17

No fear. “Father”

Little fear. “judges each one’s work impartially”

Much fear. “conduct yourselves in fear”

Passing fear. “during your sojourn”

Other possible titles

My day in court.

Here comes the Judge.

Payday – payout or payback.

Foreigners before the Judge.

Are you afraid? You should be!

Sojourners travel light.

Home sweet home. Not yet.

Be fearful of failure.

Music and songs

Songs about God the Father

Father, Father of all things I bless You.

Father God I wonder

Songs about judgement

Our God is an awesome God

Songs about reverent fear

Fear not, for I am with you says the Lord. SiS 505
Sing unto the Lord a new song (Ps.96). Ot 37

Songs about foreigners

I am a stranger here. My home is far away.
This world is not my home... I can't feel at home in this world any more.

Other possible songs

Across the lands
Ancient of Days

Offering – foreigners / sojourners motif

¹⁴ “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ¹⁵ We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶ Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you.” Prayer of David preparing for the temple. 1 Chronicles 29:14-16

Commentary 1

Singular and Plural Person

¹⁷ Since you [plural] call on a Father who judges each one's [singular] work impartially,
conduct yourselves [plural] in fear
during your [plural] sojourn.

Everyone (plural) will face the judgement, but each one (singular) will be judged individually and will not be able to share the blame, or reward, with another.

Commentary 2

Some commentators attempt, but fail, to separate the judgement of the 'bema seat' from the judgment of the 'Great White Throne'. What does Scripture say?

The 'bema seat'

βῆμα [Strong's 968] is a noun with 12 occurrences in the New Testament. It derives from the word, βαίνω, meaning "to step, a pace, to ascend, go up". The word, βῆμα, is used in this sense of a pace; a step, only once in the New Testament.

He gave him no inheritance here, not even a **foot** of ground. But God promised to give possession of the land to Abraham and his descendants, even though he did not yet have a child. Acts 7:5

However, βῆμα is principally used in the sense of "step up, to ascend", meaning "a raised place mounted by steps; a platform; a dais". βῆμα is the word which describes the elevated seat of a judge, or the elevated throne of a ruler. βῆμα is the place where justice is administered and where rewards are granted, and punishments are meted out. The βῆμα was raised so that the judge, governor, or king, could be seen and heard, even though he was seated while those around him stood.

The βῆμα is used in this sense for the official seat of Pontus Pilate.

While Pilate was sitting on the **judge's seat**, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." Matthew 27:19

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the **judge's seat** at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). John 19:13

The βῆμα is used for throne of Herod Agrippa.

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his **throne** and delivered a public address to the people. Acts 12:21

The βῆμα describes the official seat of Proconsul Gallio of Achaia

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the **place of judgment**... And he drove them away from the **judgment seat**. Acts 18:12, 16

At this, the crowd seized Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the **judgment seat**. But none of this was of any concern to Gallio. Acts 18:17

The βῆμα is used for the official seat of Porcius Festus, Procurator of Judea

After spending no more than eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he sat on the **judgment seat** and ordered that Paul be brought in. Acts 25:6

Paul replied, "I am standing before the **judgment seat** of Caesar, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. Acts 25:10

So, when they came here with me, I did not delay. The next day I sat on the **judgment seat** and ordered that the man be brought in. Acts 25:17

The apostle, Paul, was very familiar with the βῆμα as the place where the ruler and judge sat in his elevated position, and handed down his decision. Paul used that same image on two occasions to describe the place of Divine justice.

Why, then, do you judge your brother? Or why do you belittle your brother? For we will all stand before God's **judgment seat**. Romans 14:10

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

The way in which βῆμα is translated into English depends on the context in which the word occurs in the Greek original. When the person seated on the βῆμα is royalty, such as King Herod (Acts 12:21), God (Romans 14:10), or Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:10), then the appropriate translation is 'throne'. When the word is used in a judicial setting such as the court of Pilate (Matthew 27:19, John 19:13), Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17), or Festus (Acts 25:6, 10, 17), then 'judgment seat' is the appropriate translation.

In the New Testament, most of the uses of the word βῆμα (that is, 9 of its 12 occurrences) are in a secular setting. This word was widely used in the secular world of the First Century. For example, βῆμα was the seat of a political ruler. The βῆμα was the throne of a king. It was the podium on which winners were crowned with a laurel wreath. The βῆμα was also the pulpit from which an orator spoke to an audience. It was also an elevated platform.

However, while βῆμα means an elevated seat, it gives no indication of the height, size, shape, colour, material, or design of that seat. The wise Bible student will not allow the imagination to run away, but will remain with what Scripture actually states.

Great White Throne

The term Great White Throne is mentioned only once in Scripture:

Then I saw a **great white throne** and the One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. Revelation 20:11

The word used here for throne is θρόνος [Strong's 2362] a noun with 63 occurrences in the New Testament, meaning the seat of a ruler. 48 of those occurrences (76%) are found in the book of Revelation.

The beema is the throne.

The first time the term beema is used in a Divine setting, it is God Himself who is seated on the beema.

¹⁰ Why, then, do you judge your brother? Or why do you belittle your brother? For we will all stand before God's **beema**. ¹¹ It is written: "As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God." ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:10-12, BSB

The subject in this text is, God, v10; the Lord, v11; God, v11; God, v12. The Old Testament reference is to Isaiah 45:23, and the subject is YHWH Himself, throughout that chapter.

In an attempt to bolster their false claim, some commentators have claimed the people standing for the beema are believers because this text says, “we” v10, “us” v12, and the letter to Romans was written to believers. However, it quickly becomes obvious that the “we” in v10 is actually “we all” which means all humanity. This is proved by the Old Testament quote which includes the words, “every knee” and “every tongue” (v11). This is confirmed in Isaiah 45, which is the source of this quote, where both the believers and the unbelievers are called to account. Furthermore, the parallel text states:

⁹ Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name above all names, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

Every creature in the entire universe will bow before Jesus. This includes those “in Heaven” (angelic creatures), “and on earth” (humans), “and under the earth” (demonic).

What is this “highest place” that has been granted to Jesus? Jesus is seated at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Matthew 22:44; Acts 2:33). The “right hand” indicates the position of privilege and authority. Not only is Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father, He is also sitting on the very same throne with the Father. “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 3:21

So, it is clear that this beema on which God the Father is seated is the throne; the throne He shares with the Son. Since it is the Divine throne it is no wonder that it is called both “God’s beema” (Romans 14:10), and “the beema of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10), and the throne on which “the One” is seated (Revelation 20:11).

Judged for faith. Judged for works.

Some imaginative commentators suggest that the beema is a place where we are judged for our works, but the throne is where we are judged for our faith. Their assertions cannot be supported by Scripture. Let’s examine both beema references in the Divine setting, and the Great White Throne reference, in the light of faith and works.

First, the beema references:

Why, then, do you judge your brother? Or why do you belittle your brother? For we will all stand before God’s **beema**. Romans 14:10

For we must all appear before the **beema** of Christ, that each one may receive his due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10

The first beema reference gives the fact that we must appear, but gives no indication of the purpose of our appearance. The second reference makes it clear that, at the beema, we will receive rewards or punishments as the result of our choices while we were alive and in the physical body. However, a careful reading does not indicate whether “those things done in the body” were choices of faith or of works.

In fact, the chief “work” we are to do, is to believe.

Jesus replied, “The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.” John 6:29

The Great White Throne reference states:

¹¹ Then I saw a **great white throne** and the One seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. And there were open books, and one of them was the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their deeds, as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead, and each one was judged according to his deeds. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone was found whose name was not written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:11-15

This text is arguably the most comprehensive description of the coming judgement. It includes a salvation component, from the Book of Life (v12, 15); also called the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 13:8, 21:27). It also includes a deeds or works component (v12, 13) which are judged from other books, as distinct from the Book of Life.

Therefore, those who say the beema is different from the Great White Throne, are wrong. Likewise, those who say the Throne is a judgement of faith, while the beema is a judgement of works are also wrong. Any objective reading of these Scriptures show that the Divine beema is the Great White Throne, and that faith and works are judged together, at the same time, and at same place.

The time of the beema and throne

There is one other aspect of misinformation that should be addressed. The false claim also states that the Great White Throne occurs a thousand years after the beema. So, let’s ask what time frames are given in these Scriptures.

Neither of the beema Scriptures (Romans 14:10, and 2 Corinthians 5:10) give any time reference. The only time suggestion is our appearance at the beema occurs after death. But, there is no evidence that suggests either, immediately after our death, or after everyone has died / at the Second Coming, and we all stand together before the Judge. Both Scriptures simply state that “all must appear”.

However, the throne Scripture (Revelation 20:11-15) makes it clear that this event occurs at the end of time, when even the earth and heavens disappear.

Conclusion

The only difference between the Greek words *θρόνος* and *βῆμα* is a difference in emphasis. The word *θρόνος* emphasises the **position** of the person seated on it, while *βῆμα* emphasises the **performance** of that person. For example, *θρόνος* emphasises that the person is royalty and occupies an exalted position. While *βῆμα* emphasises that the person has the authority to reward or punish.

The Persons on both the beema and the throne are the same. Those people who appear before both the beema and the throne are the same. What occurs, is the same. The time must be the same. The beema is the Great White Throne.

There are far more similarities than differences between the Great White Throne and the Bema Seat. The careful Bible student will conclude that while the apostle John uses the word, *θρόνος*, and the apostle Paul uses the word, *βῆμα*, they are both describing the same Person, time, place, and action, using only slightly differing emphasises.

	Bema	Great White Throne
Who is seated	God Romans 14:10 Christ 2 Corinthians 5:10	the One Revelation 20:11
Where	(not stated)	Earth & heaven fled Revelation 20:11
Who is judged	We (mortal, not demon) Romans 14:10 2 Corinthians 5:10	The dead (mortal, not demon) Revelation 20:12
Scope	We all (every human) Romans 14:10 2 Corinthians 5:10	great and small Revelation 20:12
When	When God judges all Romans 14:10 When Christ judges all 2 Corinthians 5:10	When all the dead are judged Revelation 20:12
What is judged	things done in the body 2 Corinthians 5:10	their deeds Revelation 20:12-13

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion

1. What was it like, when you were sent to the principal's office?
2. Read Psalm 73:3-5. Why does it seem like some people have all the 'luck'? v15-17 brings a new viewpoint. What is that viewpoint, and how does it help?

3. When can fear be 'good'; and when can fear be 'bad'?
 4. Jesus tells us to 'not fear' (Luke 12:32), but 1 Peter 1:17 tells us we are to fear. How do you reconcile this apparent contradiction?
 5. Read Nehemiah 1:11, and Isaiah 11:1-3. How is it possible to "delight to fear" God's name? (This word first occurs in Gen 3:10)
 6. How are we described in the very end of 1 Peter 1:17? Jesus said something similar in John 17:16. How is it possible to be in this world but not of this world?
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