

## Your Best Life Later: The Christian and Eternal Rewards



### The Christian and Eternal Rewards

The Bible refers to human beings being “judged” or facing “judgment” by God after they die. Often associated with this understanding is what is known as ***The Great White Throne Judgment***. This is found in **Revelation 20:11-15** (all Bible texts used are from the NASB):

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Here we have what is almost universally accepted as the ***Day of Judgment*** by God with regard to the judgment of unbelievers. We know this because they are being judged according to their “deeds” and believers do not have their salvation determined by their deeds.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

These are those who opted for earning their salvation instead of accepting Christ’s righteousness which is imputed to a person the moment they believe on Christ as their Savior, thus, giving them perfect righteousness before God. Instead of that, all of these people believed that through their *deeds* they could merit their way into eternal life. The problem? No matter how good their deeds, they all still fall short of divine or perfect righteousness which is what God’s justice demands.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

But this is not the only kind of divine judgment referred to in the Scriptures. There is another kind of judgment presented in God's Word which is one of evaluation. One where the Christian and the life he or she lived, is judged. It is not one with respect to eternal life since all believers are given eternal life, rather it is one with respect to serving our Lord. And of course serving our Lord involves many things such as faithfulness, priorities, sacrifice, self-judgment, purity of heart, and so on.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

This other judgment is for believers only and is found throughout the Bible. Here are just a few texts which we will be using which refer to this judgment by our Lord Jesus:

### **2 Corinthians 5:10:**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### **Romans 14:10-12:**

<sup>10</sup> But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup> For it is written,

“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.”

<sup>12</sup> So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-14:**

<sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, ...<sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup> If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

In Christianity there are two main schools regarding this topic:

- All rewards are those blessings which come with salvation, they are one and the same.
- Salvation has its own distinct blessings which, no doubt, are overflowing. But along with this are exceptional rewards which come from our service to God.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### **Objection to rewards in addition to salvation:**

The concept of heaven as a place of perfect and constant equality among all citizens is derived from a parable taught by our Lord in **Matthew 20:1-16**:

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; <sup>4</sup> and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And so they went.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>5</sup> Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh *hour* he went out and found others standing *around*; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' <sup>7</sup> They \*said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>8</sup> "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last *group* to the first.' <sup>9</sup> When those *hired* about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> When those *hired* first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, 'These last men have worked *only* one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.'

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>13</sup> But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. <sup>15</sup> Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?' <sup>16</sup> So the last shall be first, and the first last."

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Some theologians assert that what is being presented here is the claim by Christ that in heaven we will all be equal in all things and that the idea of some having more than others is directly refuted here.

### ***The Problem?***

This parable is about salvation. Christ is preparing his Apostles and all other students, to understand that while there is a unique covenant between God and Israel, there is a universal covenant in Christ to all the world from whom all men, irrespective of their genetic or geographical properties, would inherit equally the same as the Israelites, with respect to eternal life and all that a believer receives in that inheritance.



## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

As well, an inheritance is not the same as a reward for service. One is the context of salvation, the other is the context of faithfulness. Jesus is teaching a lesson to the Israelites about the non-Israelites, called Gentiles, and that they will be co-heirs.

Rewards for faithful service, on the other hand, are above and beyond what we inherit. Christ gives us our inheritance.

However, as believers, Christ gives us the opportunity to serve him throughout our life and that service is not one without recognition and reward and will be unique for each believer.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Before we jump into some texts, keep something in mind. Our inheritance in Christ, which is for all equally, is so magnanimous we cannot even begin to imagine it, it is also eternal. That will be a condition which will never change.

Yet, what about the rewards of Christ to the believer? They, too, will be magnanimous and eternal. Therefore we must ask ourselves, how are we investing our lives? Are you investing only for today's rewards or are you investing in Christ's promise of special rewards which will never fade, never tarnish, never lose value and will exceed all of the riches one could amass in this life?

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Okay, now for some passages which address eternal rewards for the believer.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### The Bema (judgment) Seat of Christ

#### **2 Corinthians 5:10:**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

The Greek word for judgment seat here is βήματος (bēmatos) which is distinguished from **The Great White Throne Judgment**. The immediate audience of Paul's letters had in view either the Roman magistrate's seat or the Greek reference to the **Isthmian** games where the judges would sit as the participants competed for prizes. It is almost certain that Paul had the Isthmian judges in mind since many of his parallel texts from his epistles included references to competing in a race.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Thus, you will often hear this called the **Bema Seat of Christ**. This is where believers, whose eternal life was already determined when they believed on Christ, now have their lives judged by Christ with respect to their faithfulness of a life spent building upon Christ (or not), in which a portfolio of rewards is given in part or whole which are eternal.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### Eternal Gain and Loss in Rewards

#### **1 Corinthians 3:10-14:**

<sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup> If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

What do we see happening here?

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

- Impurities being burned away (what impurities?)
- A Christian life that is disharmonious with God's will does not have much in the way of reward, though still possessing so great a salvation.
- Some will lead lives which will be of great reward.

How do you imagine a life looks like that gets its works burned up when Christ vets them?

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Do not assume this is only referring to what is done within the church, it is not in the least. Building upon Christ or upon your salvation, refers to every part of your life. How you act as a citizen, in your vocation, as a friend, as a parent, as a single person, as a grandparent, and as a son or daughter and the list goes on and on. I do not mean to imply that you are somehow emancipated from your call by God to serve the church, however. It refers to all aspects of the Christian life, in and out of the church.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

The ultimate culprit of a Christian living a life out of sync with God's protocols?

Selfishness, egotism and so on, all fueled by sinful arrogance.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### **Building Upon Christ, How to**

The truth is there is no one who can cover all of the imperatives and protocols God has given us on how we build upon Christ in one class. But there is one passage, in 2 Peter, which gives us a very good overall prescription for doing this. **2 Peter 1: 1-11:**

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

**<sup>1</sup> Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.**

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. <sup>5</sup> Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup> and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>8</sup> For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.



## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Notice what the emphasis is, our internal transformation. This will produce in us a right set of priorities, right motivations and the ever increasing understanding that our building a life upon Christ is not about a check off list but about an entirely transformed person who, over time, will have a transformed manifest of their life which will be pleasing to our Lord and as Peter says in verse 11, we will have an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### **Thinking and Doing, How our Lord Measures**

The thinking of the world and the thinking of our Lord are polar opposites. And this is true when it comes to the Christian life. Often Christians are fooled into believing that they must do something great for God in order to have great reward...great that is, in the eyes of humans. How God measures greatness and how we measure greatness are not the same and the following passage reminds us of that:

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### ***Hospitality to God's People and our Generous Savior***

Matthew 10:40-42 (NASB):

<sup>40</sup> "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup> And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Think also of:

**Mark 12:38-44**

The Widow's Gift or The Widow's Mite

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### **A Warning and Encouragement about our building upon Christ**

Living the Christian life with Biblical priorities is not rewarded by the world. In fact, it often places the believer in difficult and stressful situations. Various forms of pressure are applied by various agents in order to wear down the believer so that he or she changes their value system and trades preoccupation with Christ for something else. We are told that there will be temptations to depart from living for Christ to living for the world in order that we may not have to endure the stress of the Christian life. God talks about this in his communication to the Hebrew Christians which is found in **Hebrews 10:35-11:6:**

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

**<sup>35</sup> Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.**

**<sup>37</sup> FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE,  
HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.**

**<sup>38</sup> BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;  
AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM**

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

<sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul...<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

Peeling off from the Christian life takes from us that which could have been. No matter the worldly gain you have in this life, it cannot be transferred to heaven. But that which Christ rewards is eternal. The Christian life requires faith that God will keep his promise that if we live according to his principles he will add to our salvation eternal rewards.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### Is it Acceptable for the Christian to be motivated by the Promise of Rewards?

**The Apostle Paul** – In a number of places Paul cites his anticipation of rewards. One place is **2 Timothy 4:6-8** where Paul uses the metaphor of receiving a crown of righteousness to describe the special reward for his service.

**Our Lord** – Jesus told us to “lay treasures in heaven”

**Matthew 6:20.**

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### Other Passages and Principles

**Romans 8:16-17:**

**16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.**

How is Jesus going to be glorified? He has been given a name above every name and we will share that name and its authority in eternity.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### 1 John 2:28:

<sup>28</sup> Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

Why would a believer shrink back at the coming of Christ?

Because of the life he or she lived as a believer.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

### 2 Thessalonians 3:13:

<sup>13</sup> But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

## The Christian and Eternal Rewards

There is no *Oscars Night* on this earth for serving Christ and there should not be one. Christ will reward us. Yes, spiritual maturity gives us by-product such as inner poise, confidence, wisdom and so on and in that sense there is a payday, so to speak, but even then, we can grow weary. Still, yet, we are told we will suffer at the hands of an antagonistic world. So, earth is not heaven no matter how spiritually mature we become. Hence, we are encouraged not to grow weary but have faith because you are not doing what you do for man or recognition by man but Christ. Wait on his reward. Trust him and continue, by faith, building upon Christ.