

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST & ETERNAL REWARDS

COREY STARK

I. UNDERSTANDING ETERNAL REWARDS – A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Someone once falsely said, “Don’t be so heavenly minded that you’re no earthly good.” The revelation of eternal rewards is ***very practical***, affecting our daily life choices right now. Gaining insight into our ***future rewards*** changes our ***current priorities***, the way we ***view our life*** (success) and ***value our labor***.

Col. 3:2 Set your mind on things above, NOT on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life [future fullness] is hidden with Christ in God [waiting to be revealed]... 5 Therefore put to death... evil...

Mt. 6:31 Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘...drink?’ or ‘...wear?’ 32 For after all these [earthly] things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

B. Jesus gave ***more teaching*** on eternal rewards than anyone in Scripture, knowing their value, power and significance to believers (Mt. 5-7; Rev. 2-3). As Creator, He knows that the ***desires*** of our heart operate like a compass, ***directing*** the course of our life for good or evil (Pr. 4:23; Eccl. 3:11). Therefore, He uses the subject of eternal rewards to align, motivate, and sustain the human heart in righteousness for the long-term. Whether enduring ***persecution***, resisting ***temptation*** or overcoming the ***mundane*** seasons, “eternal rewards” are designed by God to ***strengthen our resolve*** to prevail over any challenge (Mt. 6:19-21; Lk. 12:33-34).

Mt. 6:19 Do not lay up... treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal; 20 but... treasures in heaven... 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be. (Lk. 12:33-34)

C. Understanding eternal rewards gives ***great significance*** to our simple, small and secret acts of devotion, knowing that Jesus sees, values and rewards ***every sincere*** act of righteousness done for His sake in love.

Mt. 10:42 Whoever gives... only a cup of cold water... shall by no means lose his reward. (Mk. 9:41)

Heb. 6:10 God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love... you have shown toward His name...

D. Some say, “I’m not into rewards, I’m just in it for love”, because they imagine boasting about gaining superiority over others. Rewards are ***Jesus’ “gifts of love”***, expressing ***His heart*** and ***how He feels*** about the ***way we loved Him***. They ***magnify His grace*** and ***glorify Him*** (Isa. 61:3; 2 Thes. 1:10). They aid us in ***greater intimacy*** with Him and affect our ***proximity to Him*** in the age-to-come (Jn. 17:24; Rev. 3:4, 21).

Rev. 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I sat... with My Father...

Rev. 3:4 You have a few... who have not defiled their garments... they shall walk with Me in white...

E. “If you don’t think rightly about heaven, you won’t think about heaven at all.” Jesus isn’t coming to go away, but He is coming to stay and ***heaven is coming*** with Him to the earth forever (Dan. 7:13-14)! We will live in the New Jerusalem, but work and reign with Jesus on the earth (Ps. 2:8; Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 5:10). Our ***choices today*** (70-year internship Ps. 90), determine our ***future assignment*** in the age-to-come.

Rev. 11:15 Then the 7th angel sounded: And there were loud voices... “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Rev. 11:18)

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II. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST – LIVING BEFORE JESUS’ EYES OF FIRE

A. The **greatest appointment** of our lives is yet future. It is appointed for all to die once and be evaluated (Heb. 9:27). What Jesus says, as we look into His “**eyes of fire**” is the **most important** thing about our life. No one’s opinion counts and no other information can manipulate Jesus’ evaluation of the truth of our life.

Heb. 4:13 *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 19:12)*

B. We must all stand before the **judgment seat of Christ** or “evaluation seat” to **give an account** for two primary reasons (Mt. 25:14-30; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:9-11). First, on how we responded to our personal assignments in light of our life circumstances and second, on how we invested what God entrusted to us – capacities, abilities and resources (Mt. 25:14-30). We then **receive eternal rewards** that never diminish.

Rom. 14:10 *For we shall all stand before the judgment [evaluation] seat of Christ... 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (2 Cor. 5:10)*

C. The judgment seat of Christ is not the place of penalty, but reward. Knowing that He **sees everything**, even the things we forget, gives **great significance to everything** we do (simple deeds, kind words, hours of service, money, etc.). He forgets every sin that’s repented of, but sees, values and rewards every righteous deed! There is only the **pain of regret** knowing the loss of potential reward if we had been more faithful.

1 Cor. 3:8 *Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor [daily life choices]... ¹¹No other foundation can anyone lay than... Jesus Christ [free gift of salvation]. ¹²If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work [specific deeds], of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

D. We are saved as a free gift by faith in **Jesus’ work**, but we are rewarded according to **our works**. Our entrance into heaven is based on what He did, but our place in heaven is based on what we do (response).

Rev. 22:12 *My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 2:23)*

E. The judgment seat is the **great equalizer**. We are not evaluated by talent or rewarded by intention, but on **external “good works”**, which are an accurate measurement of our internal heart response to our personal assignment. Some in the kingdom will be called **least** and others **greatest** (Heb. 8:11; Rev. 11:18; 19:5).

Mt. 5:19 *Whoever breaks [consistently] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches [encourages] them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Heb. 8:11; Rev. 11:18; 19:5)*

F. Our works can’t be accurately evaluated by anyone until the fullness of time at Jesus’ return (Rev. 11:18).

1 Cor. 4:5 *Judge nothing before the time, when the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.*

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III. ETERNAL REWARDS - SEVEN TYPES

A. **Capacity for God** - He is our “exceedingly great reward” (Gen. 15:1; Song 2:16; 6:3; Rev. 21:3, 7; 22:4). Our **depth** and “**capacity**” to comprehend, commune, encounter and experience God in the age-to-come is multiplied, according to our love, desire and faithfulness to Him in this age. “**To him who has, more will be given**” (Mt. 13:12; 25:29; Mk. 4:24-25; Lk. 8:18). In Matthew 25:14-30 the servant with 5 talents was given 5 more. The servant with 2 received 2 more. Both doubled, but a capacity of 10 is still more than a capacity of 4. Everyone will “feel full”, but it’s relative in their personal capacity to experience God, even as 10-1-100 are all different (Mt. 5:8; 25:1-13; 1 Cor. 14:4; 15:58; Eph. 3:16-19; Heb. 11:35; Jude 20; Rev. 3:20).

Gen. 15:1 *The LORD came to Abram, saying... “I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”*

Rev. 3:12 *I will write on him the name of My God... and I will write on him My new name. (Rev. 22:4)*

B. **Resurrected Glory** - God will be glorified in us as His Person is physically revealed through us. Our physical resurrected **frames** will be uniquely glorified (Dan. 12:3), our **bodies** will be completely healed with perfected senses (1 Cor. 15:54), our **minds** will be 100% renewed (Jn. 8:32), our **emotions** will be fully restored (Rev. 21:4) and our **desires** will be in perfect unity with the Holy Spirit, as we delight to do God’s will (Ps. 40:6-8). The relationship that we cultivated with God in the “secret place” within us will be openly manifest to all, being revealed by the glory of His Person through us (Mk. 4:21-25; Lk. 8:16-18). To the degree we esteemed His presence valuable in this age (intimacy), we will be given more in the age-to-come.

Mt. 13:43 *The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom...*

Dan. 12:3 *Those who are wise shall shine... like the stars forever and ever. (1 Cor. 15:35-49)*

C. **Beautiful Garments** - All of the saints receive various types of garments that express our dedication and differ with each believer for “**beauty and glory**” (Ex. 28:1-43). Initially, we all receive the bright white “**garment of salvation**,” based upon Jesus’ work of redemption (Ps. 132:9, 16; 2 Cor. 5:21). However, our bright “white” garments (Gk “leukos” = light), are only one aspect of our clothing in the age-to-come. Our garments will be as diverse as our past life choices, current position of authority and the different occasions that we will participate in. Each will differ in degrees of **glory**, **beauty** and **brightness**, with its unique design, texture, coloring, jewels, ornaments, fabric, fragrance, sound and story (Rev. 3:5, 18; 19:8, 14).

Rev. 19:7 *The marriage of the Lamb has come... 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright [light], for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

D. **Kingdom Government** - All of the saints have been made a **kingdom of priests** (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5) and will share in various degrees of administrating God’s Kingdom government upon the earth forever (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 22:5)! There are many layers of authority within the governmental structure of the Kingdom, expressed through thrones, robes, crowns, chains, rings, proximity to God’s Throne (Rev. 3:21), rank in Jesus’ army, position in His 2nd coming procession, types of transportation, such as horses, chariots, clouds? (Rev. 19:14, 19) and spheres of influence (Rev. 2:26-27), including nations, cities and peoples (Hag. 2:23; Lk. 19:17-18). The saints will be instrumental in judging the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

Rev. 20:4 *I saw thrones, and they [the saints] sat on them, and judgment [decision-making] was committed to them... and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

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E. ***Eternal Gifts & Gold*** - Jesus invited all believers to earn gifts for the age-to-come, as reward for their faithful obedience in this age (Mt. 6:19-21). In Revelation 2-3 Jesus gives **26 eternal rewards** that are meant to **aid us in intimacy** with Him, while **equipping our hearts** to persevere in diligent faithfulness unto the end by being anchored in eternity (Mt. 5-7; Isa. 40:10; 62:11; 1 Cor. 3:9-15; Rev. 2-3; 11:18; 22:12).

Rev. 2:26 he who overcomes and keeps My works until the end... 28 I will give him...

1. Although the primary application of these eternal gifts is for the Millennium and beyond, we may begin to understand, receive and experience the benefits of them now, even in this age.

2. **26 Eternal Rewards:** Eat from the **tree of life**, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7); The **crown of life** (Rev. 2:10); Shall **not be hurt** by the second death (Rev. 2:11); Some of the **hidden manna** to eat (Rev. 2:17); A **white stone** (Rev. 2:17); On the stone a **new name** written which no one knows except him who receives it (Rev. 2:17); **Power over the nations** - 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' - as Jesus also received from His Father (Rev. 2:26-27); The **morning star** (Rev. 2:28); **Walk with Jesus** in white (Rev. 3:4); Clothed in **white garments** (Rev. 3:5); Jesus will **not blot out his name** from the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5); Jesus will **confess his name** before His Father and before His angels (Rev. 3:5); An **open door** that no one can shut (Rev. 3:8); Make the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie **worship before your feet** (Rev. 3:9); Make the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie... to **know that I have loved you** (Rev. 3:9); Jesus will **keep you from the hour of trial** which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 3:10); Made a **pillar in the temple of My God**, and he shall go out no more (Rev. 3:12); Jesus will write on him the **name of My God** (Rev. 3:12); Jesus will write on him the **name of the city of My God**, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God (Rev. 3:12); Jesus will write on him **His new name** (Rev. 3:12); Buy **gold** refined in the fire, that you may be rich (Rev. 3:18); Buy **white garments**, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed (Rev. 3:18); Anoint your eyes with **eye salve**, that you may see (Rev. 3:18); Jesus will **come in to him** (Rev. 3:20); Jesus will **dine with him**, and he with Me (Rev. 3:20); To **sit with Jesus on His throne**, as He overcame and sat down with His Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21).

F. ***New Jerusalem*** - We look for a City, prepared for us, which has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God (Jn. 14:2-3; Heb. 11:10, 16; Rev. 21:9-22:5). All resurrected believers will live in the New Jerusalem, while having various work assignments upon the earth. We will teach those with natural bodies by using our personal testimonies to impart faith, then afterwards return to the Eternal City, which is our home forever.

Jn. 14:2 In My Father's house [New Jerusalem] are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you.

G. ***New Heavens and New Earth*** - Even as God prepared the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve, He will renovate the heavens and the earth as a perfect environment to dwell in unhindered face-to-face communion with His people in paradise forever (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Acts 3:21; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1, 5-7). In the Millennium, Jesus will establish righteousness, peace and prosperity, while progressively restoring the **atmosphere, agriculture, animal life and age** to the original conditions of "**Paradise**" seen in the Garden (Rev. 20:1-6; Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 51:1-8; 60-62; 65:17-25; Ps. 2:6-12; 110:1-7; Deut. 8; 28; Job. 5:23; Hos. 2:18; Mt. 5:5; 6:10; 17:11; 19:28; 28:19; Acts 1:6; 3:21). We then focus on universe (Ps. 8:3-6).

Rev. 21:7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

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IV. SEVEN PRINCIPLES IN OBTAINING ETERNAL REWARDS

A. All of our “**works**” meaning our daily life choices to use our strength (time, talents, authority, energy, words, resources) under pressure and over time, especially through the mundane seasons of routine life that are **motivated by love** and done according to **His will** in **truth** and in **righteousness** will endure the “revealing fire” of that Day (1 Cor. 3:9-15), to be rewarded by the Lord Himself.

B. **Principle #1** Works that are **motivated by love** are those done on behalf of others welfare (including our enemies) without the future promise of any return (Mt. 5:43-48; Lk. 6:27-36; Heb. 6:10).

Lk. 6:27 “*But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you... 32 But if you love those who love you, what credit [reward] is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit [reward] is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit [reward] is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*

C. **Principle #2** Works done with a **thankful Heart** are those done in Jesus’ name without a spirit of complaining, but rather a spirit of thanksgiving (Col. 3:17; 1 Thes. 5:18).

Col. 3:17 *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks...*

D. **Principle #3** Works done in righteousness are those **done in sincerity** with a good attitude, not because you have to, but because you want to from a sincere heart. This is more than simply **doing**, but actions done in the **right spirit** and for the **right reason**, which requires the help of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:9; 6:5-6; Phil. 1:11; 2:13; Heb. 12:11; 13:21; Jas. 3:18).

Eph. 6:5 *Bondservants, be obedient... with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart...*

E. **Principle #4** Works done in truth are those acts of righteousness **done in secret** before the audience of God alone and not to be seen of men (Mt. 6:1-4, 5-6, 16-18). He will Himself reward you openly!

Mt. 6:1 *Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore... do not sound a trumpet... that they may have glory from men. Assuredly... they have their reward. 3 But do a charitable deed... 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*

F. **Principle #5** Works done in truth are those acts of righteousness **done unto God**. While our labors benefit men, according to the Lord our acts of service are to be done for Him (Eph. 6:5-8)!

Eph. 6:5 *Bondservants... 7 doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord...*

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G. **Principle #6** To receive our full inheritance we must persevere in faithful obedience to our personal assignments, under pressure and over time until the end (Ezek. 18:24; 33:13; 2 Jn. 1:8; Rev. 2:26-28; 3:11).

Rev. 2:25 *But hold fast what you have till I come. 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations... (Rev. 3:11)*

Heb. 11:35 *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

H. **Principle #7** Exceed expectations by going past the simplest, easiest and least requirement (Mt. 5:38-42).

Mt. 5:41 *And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*

V. HAVING THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ON ETERNAL REWARDS

A. Reaching for eternal rewards in this age will not result in our pride in the age to come. When we see one another's glory in the next age, we will not say "Wow! Look at what they've done!" Rather, "Wow! Look what God has done, even through their weakness and brokenness!" As we are glorified He is magnified!

Is. 61:1 *He has sent Me... 3 To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness... that He may be glorified.*

B. Don't imagine that someday our "works" won't feel like work. Though they're done in the Spirit and according to God's will, they are still work (Hag. 2; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9).

Heb. 6:10 *God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love you have shown toward His name...*

C. Once the assignment is over, it's over. We will have no chance of going back to change the choices we've made upon the earth. Often we think of this assignment as being until we're 70-80 years old or maybe until Jesus returns. However, we're not guaranteed that our assignment won't be over tomorrow (Lk. 12:16-21). Our life is a vapor (Jas. 4:14), grass (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24-25) and a passing shadow (Eccl. 6:12).

Lk. 12:19 *I will say, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take ease; eat, drink, and be merry." 20 But God said, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Jas. 4:13-14)*

D. In Daniel 12:12 the angel says "blessed is he who comes to the 1,335 day". Why? Because they will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies and have an additional 1000 years on earth to earn treasure for themselves (Mt. 6:19-21), including greater capacities to experience God in their future resurrected bodies.

Mt. 6:19 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth nor rust destroys...*

E. The final counsel Jesus gives to the Church is to "buy gold" refined in the fire (Rev. 3)! We do this by "spending our time" developing a close personal relationship with Him in intimacy that empowers us to persevere in diligent faithfulness to our personal assignments, while investing our resources wisely.

Rev. 3:18 *I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich...*
