



January 10th, 2021

Last Sunday I explained that there are certain aspects of end times events outlined in the Bible that stand out among the rest. Part of the reason they stand out is because God provides us with a lot of information about them.

But another reason they stand out is because with some of the end times events we will actually be involved in the event. Now if you're saved this morning, there are some events you're not going to be a part of: like the tribulation and the judgments that accompany those 7 years here on earth.

We're not going to be part of the Great White Throne Judgment where God judges the unrighteous and anyone who has failed to receive Christ as Savior.

We're not going to be one of those being thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity as judgment for their sin. Thank God we're going to miss out on these future events. Can I get an amen?

But there are a lot of the end times events where we WILL be participants. Last Sunday we climbed up the mountain-peak and looked at what the Bible says about the glories of heaven, and the fact that the best thing about heaven will be that God will be with us and we will be with Him forever.

This morning, I want to invite you to climb up with me on another mountain peak that stands over the landscape of end times events. This mountain peak is a big one – sort of like Pike’s Peak in the Rocky Mountains.

It looms large because we’re told so much about it AND because every born again child of God will participate in it. Together let’s explore what the Bible says about rewards in heaven.

Let’s take a closer look at what God is going to reward, how He will reward it and the place where those rewards are going to be given – a place and an event known by God in the Bible as the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Let me start with a little story...

Two farmers were neighbors – their farms were side-by-side. One was an atheist, the other a devoted follower of Christ. The atheist was constantly annoyed by the Christian and his trust in God.

So one winter he said to him, “Let’s plant our crops as usual this spring, and we’ll plant the exact same number of acres. You pray to your God, and I’ll curse Him. Then come the harvest in October, let’s see who has a bigger crop.” The Christian agreed.

When October came the atheist was proud to see his crop was larger. He said to his Christian neighbor, “See, you fool, mine’s bigger. What do you have to say for your God now?” The Christian farmer replied, “It just reminds me that God doesn’t settle ALL His accounts in October.”

That Christian farmer knew that life on this earth isn't all there is. He knew that there is an eternity beyond this temporal life where everyone will be called into account before Almighty God and God will settle everything rightfully.

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians...

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“...it is expected of managers that each one be found faithful. It is of little importance that I should be evaluated by you or by a human court. The One who evaluates me is the Lord. Therefore, don't judge anything prematurely, before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts. And then praise will come to each one from God.”

1 Corinthians 4:2, 4b-5

In the Bible we see that God is by nature a rewarder. He loves to reward His children and He's promised not only to reward us, but to reward those who deserve it.

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“For you repay each according to his works.”

Psalm 62:12b

“Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.”

Hebrews 11:6

These verses reveal that God is keeping accounts of our lives. He's the only one who has access to everyone's actions and words and our motives and thoughts.

And the day is coming when HE will determine who will be rewarded, why they will be rewarded and what those rewards will be. God doesn't settle accounts here in this life.

But the day is coming, in heaven, when the judgment day for our reward, or lack thereof, will take place. Two of the places in the New Testament that describe this day of reward are found in Romans and our text from last Sunday, 2 Corinthians 5.

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“For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”

Romans 14:10b – 12

2 Corinthians 5:10 is our memory verse for this week, let's say it out loud together...

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“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

Another place this is taught is here in 1 Corinthians 3...

READ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Now what these Scriptures are talking about is a future day of eternal reward for God's people based on how we live in the here and now. This passage has nothing to do with salvation. They're dealing with service.

They're not talking about whether you'll get to heaven. If you've placed your faith in Christ for salvation, you're guaranteed eternal life in heaven. Your salvation was free. It can't be earned by anything you do and when you have it, it can't be lost by anything you do.

Rather, this is all about God's desire to reward faithful followers of Christ. This is all about motivating followers of Jesus to make our lives count right now with the promise of reward in the future.

Let me show you the differences between Salvation and Rewards:

(NOTES)

SALVATION

Past (1 John 3:2)

Free (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Can't be lost (John 10:27-29)

Same for all Believers (Rom. 3:22)

For those who believe (John 3:16)

REWARDS

Future (Rev. 22:12)

Earned (1 Cor. 3:8)

CAN be lost (2 John 1:8)

Differ among Believers (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

For believers who work faithfully
(1 Cor. 9:27)

So let me make sure we're clear on this: Christ paid the price for all our sins – death - when He died on the cross. If we have trusted Him for that provision, we will not pay the price ourselves by eternally being separated from God in hell.

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“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

John 3:18

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

John 5:24

Christ has fully forgiven our sins and we are completely secure in the love of Christ, our salvation is guaranteed. But although the forgiveness of our sins has every bearing on our eternal destination, it has NO automatic bearing on our eternal rewards.

The Bible teaches not only forgiveness of our sins but also consequences for our choices in life. Our choices, even as forgiven followers of Christ, have consequences in heaven.

Forgiven people can still lose rewards or even forfeit positions of responsibility God is ready to give you in heaven, depending on decisions we make now, life-style patterns we choose now, and priorities we set now.

Write this down on your notes as the key word for each:

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SALVATION:

Key Word: Belief determines our eternal *destination* – where we’ll be for eternity.

REWARDS:

Key Word: Behavior determines our eternal *rewards* – what we'll have and what we'll do when we get there.

Works do not affect our destination, but they do affect our reward experiences at that destination. Just as there are eternal consequences to our faith, so there are eternal consequences to our works!

What we do now with our time, our resources, our money and possessions, our influence, our children, our skills, our spiritual gifts, even our freedoms and opportunities – all of this matters, not just today or a week from now, or a month from now or 20 years from now, it will matter 20 million years from now!

So the biblical principle of heavenly rewards looks like this:

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Biblical Principle of Heavenly Rewards:

We will all have differing levels of rewards and differing levels of responsibilities in heaven, depending on our actions and choices on earth.

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So, imagine that you are a stock trader and you're at your office researching the best stocks to invest. You feel a nudge on your shoulder and look up to see Jesus Christ Himself standing beside your desk!

He smiles, reaches into His pocket and gives you a sheet of paper with the ten best companies to invest your money in for the next 50 years. You can't believe what just happened! God has given you the winners you were trying to predict.

You're astonished at the grace of God and are excited to go "all in" with your money into those companies. Anything less than going "all in" would be the waste of a lifetime.

(TAKE SLIDE DOWN NOW)

In the same way, this is where the Biblical Principle of Rewards comes in. If you're a follower of Christ, God has already given you the incredible opportunity of knowing the future so that can invest your life wisely in those things He has promised to reward.

So here's the million dollar question: What actions and choices should you pursue now in order to be worthy of reward in the sight of God someday in heaven? What kind of living TODAY (in this life), is God going to reward for TOMORROW (in the next life)?

Here's what the Bible says that God rewards (On the back of your notes) – these are activities God considers gold, silver, and precious stones.

(Slide) 1. Prayer and Fasting

*"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret **will reward you...** But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting*

may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Matthew 6:6, 17-18

The first guaranteed winner of reward in heaven is prayer and fasting. God desires that his children seek Him through faith-filled prayer and fasting. Prayer is one of the chief ways we show our reliance on God and are able to know Him and to see His will done on earth as it is in heaven.

(Slide) 2. Having compassion for the vulnerable

“...Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’” Matthew 25:37-40

Having compassion for the needy by clothing, feeding, welcoming them, and assisting them is seen by God as us clothing, feeding, and welcoming Christ Himself. This is a magnificent picture of serving God and something God promises to reward.

Example: MEXICO MISSIONS TRIP

(Slide) 3. Bearing insults and being excluded for the name of Christ

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.” Luke 6:22-23

It seems to be a backwards thing for us to be told to “rejoice” and “leap for joy” when we are hated for being Christians. But that is exactly what Jesus says.

He knows that persecution in His name brings promised blessing and rewards and glorifies the Father. The gospel of Jesus Christ is so great that, even when we are ridiculed on earth for it, we receive treasure in heaven.

(Slide) 4. Loving your enemies

“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.” Luke 6:35

Just as we receive blessing from God for being insulted for the name of Christ, we also receive blessing and rewards for loving the very ones who insult us.

When we love our enemies we emulate the kind of mercy and grace that our Savior showed to those who were crucifying Him when He said, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

Christ showed the grace of the Father by loving His enemies and gives us the opportunity to show His grace and gain eternal rewards by loving our enemies.

(Slide) 5. Giving generously

“...Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38

Giving to God's kingdom and to others is the fifth action God promises to reward. Every dollar you have, every material item you own, every skill you have is a gift from Almighty God.

Knowing that all we have is a gift from God, why should we not seek to generously give to build God's kingdom and to bless others, especially when we consider that this is an activity God promises to reward?

Giving starts with giving God the first 10% - the Tithe – through the local church where He has placed us. And it extends beyond that as we bless the needy, and support missionaries and missionary projects around the world.

New Message Series starting in 2 weeks:

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(Slide) 6. Hospitality that cannot be repaid

“He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” Luke 14:12-14

There are many things in life that will not repay you here on earth, including many times we are hospitable. But God does not overlook our efforts—He promises to reward us for our hospitality in His name.

(Slide) 7. Enduring pressures in ministry

“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

If you have ever been discouraged in your ministry for the Lord, take heart. God promises to reward us for how we serve Him on earth. We mustn't let discouragement or depression keep us from being faithful.

(Slide) 8. Performing quality work for your employer

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23-24

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not just penetrate personal and spiritual lives of believers, it enters into the workplace as well. When we do our best work for our employer, we are doing our best work for Jesus.

Working heartily for the Lord is one way to show Him your gratitude for the amazing things He has given you in Christ. God will not let your effort go unnoticed, but promises to give you a reward for your labor.

(Slide) 9. Keeping faith through trials

"...In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:6-7

God desires that we walk by faith at all times, and keeping faith during trials is no exception. God encourages us to keep pressing on even through trials because He is waiting to reward us when we get there.

(Slide) 10. Being faithful to the truth

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward." 2 John 1:7-8

God deeply desires our full commitment to His truth. Jesus said He *is* the Truth (John 14:6), so that makes sense! Our commitment and self-examination honors God and secures the reward that we will receive.

So those are the things God promises to reward. Let me answer one more question now in regards to rewards in heaven. We've already seen the kind of living in the here-and-now (on earth) that God is going to reward in the there-and-then (in heaven).

The main question that remains is, *How* will we be rewarded? What's the nature of the reward? The reward is two-fold:

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How Will We Be Rewarded?

1. The Reward of: Rulership – Revelation 20:6; Matthew 25:21-23; Luke 19:17-24

“And they will reign with him for a thousand years.”

Revelation 20:6b

Now the best to way to think of these rewards is by thinking about them in the context of our jobs here are on earth.

My first real job was at Kentucky Fried Chicken. So let’s say you get a job at Chicken Fried Chicken washing dishes. Every time they schedule you, you show up on time, put on your apron, do everything that is required of you plus more, and show that you can handle responsibility.

In time, they’re going to say, “Hey that guy’s reliable, that girls’ reliable and we have a spot available over here frying chicken, let’s promote him.” So they promote you and now you’re making more money frying chicken than you were doing dishes.

And once again, you show up when you’re scheduled, do your very best, have a good attitude, and show respect to your manager. Before you know it they need someone to run the cash register out in the lobby and handle additional responsibilities like customer service.

Since you’ve proven yourself frying chicken they move you up again. Now you’re making more money, and instead of wearing an apron you’ve got a stylin’ shirt with your name on it.

And like before, you prove that you are dependable, you treat the customers with respect, you represent the organization well with your attitude, you don't fight with the other employees and you work hard and don't sluff off like some of the others do.

Soon the manager decides he needs to train you an assistant manager. So he calls you into his office and compliments you on your work ethic. He offers you the training position and before you know it, you've got another bump in pay and you're wearing a cool hat and your name tag says, "Assistant Manager."

This process continues, and eventually you become a manager, then a district supervisor and you end up in the corporate office with a private office and a secretary.

And it all started when you put that first apron on and you stood at the hot sink washing dishes and instead of seeing your job as small and insignificant, you took it seriously and showed you could be trusted and depended on.

I know what you're thinking, "See Rob, that could have been you." I know, you're right, the only problem was I liked hamburgers more. 😊

God operates in the same way. God entrusts us now with responsibilities. He shows us how He wants us to live our lives in a way that will bring Him glory.

And if we are faithful with what He gives us now and we honor Him and show ourselves to be responsible, He increases those responsibilities and grants us more opportunities to bring Him glory and honor.

And the continuum of faithfulness and reward, faithfulness and reward carries over from our lives here on this earth into heaven and for all of eternity.

God has promised that if we are faithful now, He will grant us the privilege of ruling with Him in His heavenly kingdom.

The Bible reveals that although all believers in Christ will be with Christ in heaven, not all of us are going to reign with Him with the same responsibility and authority.

If we aren't faithful here and now, He's not going to place us in positions of responsibility and authority in His kingdom because we haven't proven ourselves to be trustworthy.

The place that's going to happen will be during Christ's 1,000-year reign here on earth. Now later, after the millennium, in our eternal state on the new earth, our role will be different.

There will be no one to rule over because we'll all be subjects of Christ's eternal kingdom, there will be no one in flesh and blood bodies like there will be during Christ's millennial reign.

In the eternal state instead of ruling, we'll be worshiping God, serving God and reigning with Him forever. Jesus even promised in Revelation 3 that He will share His throne with us. Can you imagine? Jesus is going to share His righteous throne with us. Amazing!

So, the first reward is further and additional service, ruling with Christ in His millennial kingdom. The second reward is of a different nature. It's the giving of...

(Slide) 2. The Reward of: Crowns

A crown is the symbol of one who reigns. And the Bible records that God has promised that He is going to award at least 5 different crowns in heaven – again based on what we do and how we live right now on earth.

(Slide) (Notes)

1. The Crown of Life – given for faithfulness to Christ in persecution or martyrdom (James 1:12; Revelation 2:19).
2. The Incorruptible Crown – given for determination, discipline, and victory in the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).
3. The Crown of Rejoicing – given for pouring oneself into others in evangelism and discipleship (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 4:1). (Also called the Soul Winner's Crown)
4. The Crown of Glory – given for faithfully representing Christ in a position of spiritual leadership (1 Peter 5:1-4)
5. The Crown of Righteousness – given for joyfully purifying and readying oneself to meet Christ at his return (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

All of these crowns – and there may be more, these are the ones we know of for sure – will be graciously given by the Lord to believers who have shown themselves to be faithful to Him in this life.

At that time there will be an overwhelming sense of unworthiness because we will know with all our heart that it wasn't by *our* strength that we were faithful, it wasn't by *our* power that we were proved worthy...

But it was ALL because of *His* power and strength and Spirit that enabled us – all the glory will go to Him!

Now in light of the reality of these rewards, there are two dangers that we all have to guard against:

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- 1. The danger of whittling our life away focusing on the temporal things of this life instead of the eternal kingdom of God. That's why Jesus said...**

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.” Matthew 6:33

Jesus didn't say ignore the things of this world. He said prioritize them. Seek God's kingdom first and then other priorities will fall naturally into the right place. That's the only way to ensure that we don't waste our lives and miss eternal reward.

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- 2. The danger of forfeiting the rewards that are already being credited to our account.**

“Watch yourselves so that you don't lose what we have worked for, but you may receive a full reward.” 2 John 8

The danger for many Christians is that they've been faithful to God for many years and then something happens. They take their focus off Jesus, and off the reward that He is ready and waiting to give them, and they put their focus on something or someone else.

And instead of finishing strong in the twilight years of their life, they fall away. And the rewards in heaven they were accumulating through their faithfulness begin to disappear because of their unfaithfulness.

And only God knows how all this is going to end up in heaven on the day He rewards us, but you can be sure that He's keeping good records and His rewards will be given proportionate to the actions and choices we're making now!

Fellowship, we don't have to wait until we die to know how we should live. God has given us His Word and it tells us how to live, and we have the Spirit of God living inside us, empowering to live as we should.

Remember this...

1. We're all accountable for our actions – we've given you lots of examples of what actions Jesus said will be rewarded in heaven.
2. We're accountable for our thoughts. Revelation 2:23 says, *"I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works."*
3. We're all accountable for our words – Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37, *"On that day of judgment people will give account for every careless*

word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Illustration: TOOTHPASTE (like toothpaste, once our words are out, it's impossible to get them back in. It's hard to undo the damage of our words.

4. Remember, we're all accountable for all of life itself – time, relationships, talents, abilities, and our possessions.

I want you to take home this truth...

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“Everything you do today matters forever!”

My prayer is that what will be important to us 5 minutes after we die in heaven, will become what is most important to us right here, right now!

Let me address anyone here or watching who isn't saved – you've haven't put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ to forgive you of your sin and give you eternal life.

Forget a moment about rewards. For anyone not saved, not only are there no rewards, there's no life without Jesus. An eternal existence in the torments of hell is the best you can hope for.

That's why the Bible says...

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“See, now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation.”

2 Corinthians 6:2b

If you here or you're watching and you need to accept Christ as your Savior, I pray you'll put your faith in him today.