

Study 0029

Scripture Text: Hebrews 6:2c; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Having studied eternal judgment in general, we want to focus on the matter of The Judgment Seat of Christ, particularly, the issue of rewards. As stated in our last study, the Judgment seat of Christ is the place where believers in Christ will stand before Christ to receive the rewards of what they did while on earth.

Salvation is not obtained by works; however, after we have been freely saved, we must begin to do good works (**Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:3-8**). The good works done after the gift of salvation, then become the yardstick for giving rewards to believers; for before then, everything we did was considered dead works. Furthermore, works done without divine approval are also considered dead works, and do not count. This leaves us with works done in response to the word of God, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the desire of a heart that is in love with his Maker. Generally, people tend to assume that all works done would be considered good works and eligible for rewards, but this is not true. The truth is that there are parameters like, the motive for doing the good deed, your complete obedience in prosecuting the good deed, and whether or not the good deed was carnally done or in the power of God. The example of Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-10**) is a classical illustration of God's judgment regarding our conduct and good deeds. Ananias and Sapphira did what men would ordinarily see as good deeds, but the Holy Spirit saw their deception, falsehood, evil intention, selfish motivation, and lies (**1 Samuel 16:7**). The resultant judgment was swift and instant! Although that judgment occurred here on earth, it mirrors the kind of judgment of the works of believers in eternity, for our works shall be tried by fire, and if a man's works be found wanting he shall suffer loss; but if not, he shall obtain a reward. We shall therefore look at the issue of eternal rewards from two perspectives: (a) the basis for rewards; and, (b) the rewards.

The Basis For Eternal Rewards

Our works, in being tried by fire will be judged for piety (godliness), purity, and integrity (**Revelation 22:10-28**). To help us do good works according to God's standard therefore, God has given every believer the necessary resources—the Spirit of God and the word of God (**Acts 10:38; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**). This means that if a believer in Christ fails to obtain a reward, it would be because he did not avail himself of heaven's resources, choosing instead to utilize human resources, which do not count. It would also mean that he chose to follow man's pattern and assessment, rather than God's (**1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 10:12**)!

Everything that the believer in Christ does during his stay on earth will be judged by Christ (**1 Corinthians 3:10; Ephesians 6:5-8**). Some of these things will include the things we were willing to let go for Christ and for the sake of the kingdom of God (**Matthew 19:27-29; Luke 14:25-27**); our faithfulness in serving God (**1 Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 16:1-12; 19:12-26; 1 Corinthians 3:6-8**); our speech (**Matthew 12:36-37**); and, our motives (**Luke 14:12-14; Galatians 6:7-10**); to mention a few.

Eternal Rewards

The bible makes it clear that there will be rewards in eternity, and that they will be given to all who are born again, and who have given up certain things for the sake of the Kingdom of God

(**Matthew 19:16-29**). It is therefore not sufficient to just be born again; you must in addition, live as God wants, for you to be eligible for consideration for eternal life. Of course, there are cases where a person surrenders his life to Christ just before his death. For such a person, eternal life is guaranteed (**Luke 22:39-43**) and nothing else. But for those who having surrendered their lives to God, continue to live on earth; it is expected that they will live according to the standards of God, and have good works to show or present in heaven. It is these good works which will form the basis for their eternal rewards.

What really are eternal rewards? Eternal rewards are those things of great value and eternal glory, which will be given to believers in Christ who have labored in the vineyard of God according to God's standard. They include: mansions, inheritance and crowns. The Lord Jesus mentioned mansions in the His parting discourse with His disciples (**John 14:1-3**). These mansions are heavenly abodes built by the Lord Himself for those believers who have served Him creditably. Obviously, those mansions will be furnished by the Lord Himself. It is like being given the keys to an already furnished house that you did not build. An inheritance is something valuable and precious, received (inherited) from a father. As pertains to eternal reward, an inheritance is the precious and invaluable gift handed down by God to His sons (**Colossians 3:22-24**). This heavenly inheritance is not perishable nor does it decay, and God has kept it safe for all His children who will experience the first resurrection (**1 Peter 1:3-5**). Then there is the word translated 'crown' in scripture, with regards to eternal rewards. This word, is a figure of the athletes' victory wreath of the Roman days (**1 Corinthians 9:25**); what we would variously call today; a medal, a medallion, a national merit award, an international award, etc., except that it is a crown. A crown, as an eternal reward, can be likened to a 'medal of honour' given to those who have served God acceptably (**2 Timothy 2:5**). It is the bestowal of honour and glory in heaven, on the believer in Christ, for the things he did on earth to glorify God. There are five identifiable crowns related to eternal rewards in scripture and these are:

- (a) ***The crown of life***. This is a reward that is given to all those who faithfully endure temptation and persecution and overcome at the end. It is a reward that bestows eternal life on the recipient. It is expected that you cannot enter the kingdom of God, except you have successfully overcome temptation and persecution (**2 Timothy 3:12; Matthew 5:10-12**). It is not enough to endure temptation or persecution for a while; you must endure till the end! **James 1:12; Revelation 2:10**.
- (b) ***The crown of righteousness***. This reward is for living righteously and is meant for those who are eagerly yearning for the return of the Lord (**2 Timothy 4:8**). The implication is that such people are righteous and ready for His return at any time, and do not wish that the day be delayed (**2 Peter 3:12**), as they actively spread the good news of the kingdom (**Matthew 24:14**)!
- (c) ***The crown of glory***. This is essentially the crown that those who pastor God's people will be given on the last day. It is a reward for doing the work of shepherding the flock of God according to God's requirement. A pastor is not necessarily the person who gives himself the title, but one who is doing the work of a pastor, and may include a small group leader, a women's group leader, a children's leader, etc. This is not a reward based on how many people are in your church, but one of how willingly and diligently you took care of the flock of God! **1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Proverbs 27:23-27**.
- (d) ***The crown of rejoicing***. This is the reward that those winning souls will receive. The rejoicing will be the joy of the souls saved, and credited to the account of the believer. Here, the yardstick is not limited to the individual leading a person to Christ, but also, all

those who were involved in the process share in the reward: those who prayed for the souls, those who invited them to church or who led them to the meeting where they were saved, and those whose lifestyle challenged the unsaved to get saved. **1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43; Proverbs 11:30; James 5:20; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.**

- (e) *The incorruptible crown.* This is a reward for enduring deprivation, as well as engaging in spiritual exercises that seek to sanctify us before God. It is clearly a crown that never fades and cannot be destroyed. This is the crown given to those who have given up things that they could otherwise have kept, for the sake of the kingdom of God and the gospel; those who have consecrated and devoted themselves to the service of God in any capacity; and, those who have totally surrendered to God (that is, those that the world would call 'fools'). **Matthew 19:16-29; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 2:3-5; 1 Peter 1:4-17.**

Conclusion

The vision of 24 elders in heaven who had crowns on their heads and who sat before God, proves that if we meet the conditions, we would be given crowns in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ (**Revelation 4:4**). The importance of sharing about eternal rewards is (a) to give the believer in Christ hope; knowing that whatever is given up here on earth, will be gained in heaven as a more glorious reward; (b) to encourage those who are holding on to God, not to think that they are losing anything, but to remain firm and resolute in their worship of God, for in due season they will be rewarded; and, (c) to warn all and sundry that though it may seem like God is not taking notice of things happening around, He certainly is, and He will compensate those who have given up all, and will leave bare those who have refused to seek Him wholeheartedly (**Daniel 12:2**). May the Lord help us!

EXERCISE

Please answer true or false to the statements below:

1. Eternal reward is what we get for working hard to be saved.
2. All believers will be rewarded equally.
3. Eternal rewards will be given here on earth and at the final judgment.
4. God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira is an example of an eternal reward.
5. In giving eternal rewards, Christ will be looking at piety, purity and integrity.
6. If a person has no good works to present before he leaves the earth, he can obtain permission when he gets to heaven to quickly return and do some good deeds.
7. Your motive for doing what you are doing is as important as the deed itself.
8. Eternal rewards include inheritance and crowns.
9. To be eligible for eternal rewards the only requirement is that you are born again.
10. An inheritance as an eternal reward is something we inherit from our earthly parents who were spiritual.
11. Some of the crowns to be given in heaven include the crowns of life, prosperity, and health.
12. For overcoming temptation, the reward is the crown of life.
13. For eagerly expecting the return of the Lord, the reward is the crown of rejoicing.
14. The crown of rejoicing is also for people whose lives challenge the unbeliever to get born again.
15. The crown of glory is for pastors of mega churches.
16. The incorruptible crown is for those who are agents of anti-corruption in the church.

17. If you endure deprivation even though you could have had what you are being deprived of, the reward is the crown of righteousness.
18. The teaching on eternal rewards is given to enable us discuss the matter of what we would be getting among ourselves.
19. In meeting my personal needs, I am building my reward base in heaven.
20. By learning about eternal rewards, our eternity is settled.