



## A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 15: Rewards

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A minister dies and, resplendent in his clerical collar and colorful robes, waits in line at the Pearly Gates. Just ahead of him is a guy dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans.

Saint Peter addresses this first guy, "Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?"

The guy replies, "I'm Joe Green, taxi-driver, of Noo Yawk City." Saint Peter consults his list, smiles and says to the taxi-driver, "Take this silken robe and golden staff, and enter into the Kingdom."

So the taxi-driver enters Heaven with his robe and staff, and the minister is next in line. Without being asked, he proclaims, "I am Michael O'Connor, head pastor of Saint Mary's for the last forty-three years."

Saint Peter consults his list and says, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Just a minute," says the preacher, "that man was a taxi-driver, and you issued him a silken robe and golden staff. But I get wood and cotton. How can this be?"

"Up here, we go by results," says Saint Peter. "While you preached, people slept -- while he drove, people prayed."

**NOTE:** For the last couple of lessons or so, we've been studying the Rapture. Today, I want to move to the next event in the sequence.

For believers, an event that immediately follows the rapture is **'rewards.'** It's an encouraging promise to the faithful. When Jesus returns, we'll meet Him in the air, return to His Father's house, and receive our rewards.

While the above joke brings a chuckle or two, the fact DOES remain that the things we do on earth matter, if we are truly "saved in Christ."

**INTRODUCTION: Cf. Revelation 22:12** – *“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”*

- A. In **John 14:1-3**, Jesus Christ is returning for us as He promised to do.
1. The Bible tells us He is bringing His rewards with Him when He does.
  2. At the end of his life, Paul stated the same as the passage in **Revelation**: there are coming rewards: **(Cf. 2 Timothy 4:7-8)**:  
*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is laid up for me the Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but to all who crave His appearing....”*
  3. When I look forward to the rapture, and I do, I am showing faithfulness and I am demonstrating my faith as I anticipate the ‘rewards’ which follow immediately.

**NOTE:** Before we get carried away by our imaginations, we need to be reminded that this event in which we get our rewards is called the ‘Judgment Seat of Christ.’

- B. The Judgement Seat of Christ. **2 Corinthians 5:10**:  
*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*
1. It is in this verse that Paul says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He's talking TO believers and ABOUT believers. He states this again in **Romans 14:10**:  
*“You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.”*
  2. QUESTION: Is it proper to think in terms of judgment as we typically understand the term? It is naturally confusing, so let’s look at what this ‘judgment seat’ is all about and how does it relate to rewards?
  3. This is an important subject. If I'm going to be at the judgment seat of Christ, then I want to know what I can learn. I want to have the best possible circumstances waiting for me.

**I. UNDERSTANDING THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. (Using When, What, Where, Who and Why).**

**A. When:**

1. Having read **Revelation 22:12**, it is substantiated that it's going to happen immediately after the Rapture: *“Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me...”*

- a. The picture is Christ coming and with Him is the reward.
- b. Paul states the very same. It is a day, a specific 'day' he says, and it's the day defined by "His appearing"

#### B. What:

1. The judgment seat of Christ, as it is called by Paul, is going to take place – this feels 'fearful.'
  - a. We typically associate judgment with,...the consequences of 'sin.'
  - b. This suggests idea that we're going to stand before Jesus Christ and all of our sins and secrets are going to be blown up on a screen (Movie: "This Is YOUR Life.")
  - c. It's like the joke suggests. We will meet St. Peter at the pearly gates, he reviews a checklist of sorts and we get a pass. This is not a Biblical scenario.
  - d. The notion of judgment is indeed scary. However, this standard notion does not apply to true believers. This is made evident in other Scripture. **Cf. Romans 8:1**

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,"* (Jesus has FULLY paid the penalty for our sins, and when God the Father looks at us, He sees us covered by the redeeming blood of Christ).

- e. **Cf. also Ephesians 1:7** *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace."* (Get that? We have as much forgiveness as He has grace.)
- f. So what must we conclude from this 'judgment?' Go back to: **2 Corinthians 5:10**
- g. **'Judgment seat'** It is the Greek term: 'Bema' (elevated platform accessed by steps, a place of inspection and examination. The King James translation, it has mostly been rendered 'judgment,' however, is more akin to "a location of honor." (NOTE: it's a real 'place' not an 'act'))
- h. Has no connotation of penalty. It is more of authority, recognition, or dignity.
- i. Outside Corinth was a large Olympic stadium. People of that day were familiar with athletes that climbed the bema to receive their honor. Every Christian will climb up on the honor stand. That is really what is being said here.
- j. It is not something to be afraid of (**Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:5b** – *"...Then each one will receive his commendation from God."*) (THERE ARE NO LOSERS IN CHRIST...)

#### C. Where:

1. Where is the *Bema Seat* and what is it?
  - a. It's in heaven. Why?
  - b. Jesus said in **John 14**, *"I'm going to come and I'm going to get you. I'm going to take you to the Father's house."*
  - c. If we're going to meet Him in the air and go and be with Him, then that's where it's got to be, immediately after the Rapture in heaven.

#### D. Who:

1. Now let's look at the person. Who is the judge? Who is the one that's running the show when we get there?
  - a. We know who. *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of .....(focus on the next word).....Christ."*

- b. We meet Him in the air according to *1 Thessalonians 4:17*, and "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Jesus Christ is the one that's going to administer the rewards.
  - c. **NOTE:** It's a very personal occasion. It's a moment in the grand expanse of eternity when you and I are face-to-face with our Creator and Savior.
  - d. Just the thought of standing face-to-face with Jesus and hearing Him say, "This is for you from Me for your faithfulness." Overwhelming!
2. Who else? Who all is going to be there for this?
- a. Who's going to be there? **Cf. 2 Corinthians 5: 10** again: "For we must all appear...."
  - b. It's the church. It's an occasion uniquely prepared for the Bride of Christ. It's Christians.
  - c. Paul is a Christian talking to Christians and so the pronoun would include him and all of them. This point is made clear in **verses 1 to 9**.

**E. Why:**

1. Why is this taking place? To evaluate or test our earthly works. If there is a 'negative' in all this – here it is: **(Cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15)**.
- a. **Note:** Here, the same occasion is detailed to us. Here we see some of the details that take place at the judgment seat of Christ.
2. First, there are two types of works: (Everything we do here on earth falls into one of two categories...)
- a. The worthy works (have value)
  - b. worthless works (have no value)
  - c. (**Note:** some translations suggest 'good' and 'bad.' However, it is best to think in terms of 'worth.' Some of our works are not going to be worth anything, most of them by far, in fact!)
3. How will our works be evaluated? (Two ways):
- a. **Motives.** (That should cause distress, because there are many people who have a lot of works but they did those things for all the wrong reasons.)
    - God's going to judge the motives, and many works that look good on the surface will be disqualified. How do we know that? **Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:5:** "He's going to bring to light the hidden things of darkness and the secret counsels of the heart."
    - "The secret counsels of the heart" is a poetic way of saying; "It's about our motives and our hidden desires."
    - I hear that and I say as the Psalmist does, "Search me O God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there be any wicked way in me." (**Psalms 139:23**)
    - This issue is similar in concept to what a wise man once said, "Your future happiness depends on the thoughts you produce today."

- b. **Conduct.** We're going to give an accounting for the things done in the body and then He's going to judge the service. This is the action part that is being evaluated.
- Every feature of our Christian life is going to be exposed to see whether it has eternal value, to see if it remains after the test, and is worthy of reward.
  - The quality of our works will be tested by fire. **(Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:13)** Will it endure this process? (Sort of like a stone chimney that still stands after a house fire) - If it survives the test; we get a reward.
  - Worthless works are like hay or straw: they get burned up and disappear. Worthy works will endure the test like gold, silver, and costly stones.

NOTE: Can we know the specific nature of our rewards? What are they and how are they dispensed?

## II. FIVE CROWNS MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE PROVIDED TO BELIEVERS AS REWARDS:

**Note:** These are symbols of rulership, authority, and are provided to us on the basis of our faithful service that we demonstrate while we are in this present body on earth.

**Note:** Paul challenged Timothy **(Cf. 2 Timothy 4:5)** to *'fulfill your ministry'* (In other words, we are to take advantage of all opportunities to use our talents and energies to maximize God's Kingdom and our rewards while we're still on Earth.

### A. The Crown of Righteousness **(Cf. 2 Tim. 4:7-8)**

1. Not easy to live a righteous life in unrighteous age and place – It is a constant struggle.
2. Many Christians are not used by God because they do not live a 'righteous life.'
3. IMPORTANT POINT: We are aided in living correctly when we view Christ's return correctly.
4. Drives us to live the sort of life God would approve.
5. Imminency: Rapture could come at 'any moment' helps this ambition.
6. This Crown of Righteousness will not be given to those who dilute, deride, and otherwise discount the prophetic doctrines; it's not possible based on text.

### B. The Incorruptible Crown **(1 Corinthians 9:25-27)- sometimes called 'The Victor's Crown' or 'Imperishable Crown.'**

1. Given to the faithful believer who denies himself and his personal desires. How?
  - a. By keeping our eyes on the ultimate goal (winning the race)
  - b. By self-discipline: (a conscious exertion of the will over selfish desires)
  - c. By avoiding sin: (and perhaps even good things that other believers enjoy)
  - d. By rigorously training and getting one's priorities right

- e. (Note: seems few believers in this self-indulgent age will earn this crown. A good example of one who probably did is Moses. **Cf. Hebrews 11:24-26**)

**C. The Crown of Life (Cf. James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10)**

- 1. Given for a proper response to persecution and trial – even to point of death
  - a. For this reason, this crown is often called the ‘Martyr’s crown’
  - b. Seems to be associated with a test of the sincerity of our faith (Which is why we should ‘consider it joy). **James 1:2-3**
  - c. Trials are a process through which our present faith is tested and proven to be valid – the REAL DEAL
  - d. Be assured – all those who persevere under trial will be compensated well

**D. The Crown of Rejoicing (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19)**

- 1. This is a special ‘Soul-winners’ crown given to those who have majored in leading others to faith in Christ.
  - a. Paul was such an individual – he led many to Christ and taught them in their faith
  - b. ‘Rejoicing’ – even the angels rejoice over one sinner repenting (**Cf. Luke 15:7**)
  - c. In view of eternity and its implications, reaching others for Christ is the most important goal

**E. The Crown of Glory (Cf. 1 Peter 5:1-4 – Sometimes called the ‘Elder’s Crown’)**

- 1. Appears to be a special crown given to those who teach and share God’s Word
  - a. Not provided just for title or position, but for faithful service (It boils down to motives).
  - b. Note the important criteria for such people to gain this crown:
    - Be shepherds – lay aside your own wishes and ambitions in order to watch out for the spiritual welfare of others
    - Not about ‘dishonest gain’ – one cannot have competing, temporary, and unrighteous motives.
    - “Not lording it over others” – too many Elders and Christian leaders see their position as one of “power” or “personal right” (They risk forfeiting this reward if they do).
    - “Being examples” – for sure, such Elders and Church leaders have set aside their Crown of Glory when they engage in dishonesty, cover-up, bad agendas, ego-driven ambitions, or any sort of similar misbehavior.

**Conclusion:** We need to consciously ‘lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven’ (**Cf. Matt. 6:19-21**).  
**NOTE:** This moment, too, is part of eternity.