

A Biblical View OF THE END TIMES

WHAT ARE OUR REWARDS ALL ABOUT?

Week #23; June 14, 2026, 6PM

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NOTE: For the last couple of lessons, we've been studying the question, "What happens when we die?" Before that, we took a deep dive into the doctrine of the Rapture.

Today, I want to move to another event that is positioned within this same approximate timeframe and mix of events - - and that is our **rewards**. This should be a compelling lesson.

For TRUE believers in Jesus Christ, an event that immediately follows the Rapture is that event in which we receive our '**rewards**.' This is an encouraging promise to those who REMAIN faithful.

When Jesus supernaturally snatches His church up from earth, we'll meet Him in the air. We'll then return to His Father's house. That is 'up in heaven,' not down here. We've learned this already.

Jesus says, in **John 14:1-3**, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*"

INTRODUCTION:

- After Jesus takes us to be with Him in His Father's house, that is when we will receive our rewards. Various Bible passages, together with **John 14:1-3**, show this sequence.
- **For example**, the last chapter of the Bible is **Revelation Ch. 22** - - and the verse that begins the last half of the last chapter is about our rewards.

(Cf. Rev. 22:12 / Jesus speaking) - "*Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.*"

- There are three important issues we are reminded about in this verse:
 - **FIRST**, Jesus is coming 'soon.' The Greek word is "*tachy*," and it means 'swift,' 'suddenly,' or 'without unnecessary delay.'
 - The use of '*tachy*' in this verse underscores the '**imminent Rapture**' we have studied before. It will happen suddenly and swiftly.
 - **SECOND**, this verse is also about **rewards**. Jesus will return for His church without unnecessary delay - when the time is perfect by His sovereign plan.

- (And) when He returns for us, He will bring His rewards. He will **reward** His most faithful followers, which means not everyone will get these rewards as we will learn in a bit.
 - Jesus does not operate on woke principles! Everybody on the losing team does NOT get a trophy.
 - Only those who properly qualify get rewarded. Only those who have ‘fought the good fight’ and have endured the right way will be recognized.
 - Then **THIRD** (and this ties into the second point), the fact is the things we do on this earth - the choices we make and the motives we have - - really DO matter in our life to come if we are truly “saved in Christ.”
 - This reminds us to preserve an eternal perspective. It urges us to have the right priorities. And this encourages us to endure **properly** under trials.
- **Here is another passage that shows our rewards follow our arrival in heaven.** At the end of his life, Paul stated the same thing that **Revelation 22:12** says: “there are coming rewards.”

(Cf. 2 Tim. 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....**”**

- Takeaways: We should ‘fight the good fight’ on this earth with a **good** perspective, and we need to **finish well**. Starters are a ‘dime a dozen,’ but finishers are rare.
- We can persevere on this earth and endure its corruption and trials, but if we do that with a resentful and bitter attitude, that’s not a posture which will be rewarded. We will sacrifice our rewards if we do the right thing with a wrong motive.
- It is our RIGHT efforts, intentions, and faithfulness on this earth that will be ‘rewarded.’ That occasion will follow the Rapture and our arrival in heaven which **John 14:1-3** and **Revelation 22:12** together make clear.
- And this will happen on ‘*that day*.’ It is when He ‘*appears*.’ There is a specific time for getting these rewards. ALL of God’s faithful who have been raptured will be part of that occasion when it happens.
- (That brings us to.....)

THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST -

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

1. This is stated in **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.”*

- It's here Paul says – again! - we must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He's talking TO believers and he's talking 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.”

QUESTION: But is it proper to think of ‘judgment’ as we typically understand that term?

- The issue is naturally confusing - - so let's look at what this ‘judgment seat’ is all about and how does it relate to rewards?
- 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, and I want to have the best possible circumstances waiting for me. I want to be prepared....
- **(Basic outline): Who, what, where, when, why?**

A. When?

1. I just read **Rev. 22:12**, and there it is substantiated that it's going to happen right after the rapture: *“Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me...”*
 - The picture is Christ coming ‘suddenly,’ and with Him is our rewards.
 - Paul states the very same thing; it is a day - a specific ‘day,’ he says - and it's the day that is defined by “His appearing.” That's the **‘when.’**

B. What?

1. The *‘judgment seat of Christ,’* as it is called by Paul, WILL take place – admittedly, this feels ‘fearful.’
 - We typically associate judgment with the consequences of ‘sin.’
 - This phrase suggests the notion we're going to stand before Jesus Christ and all of our sins and secrets are going to be blown up on a screen for everyone to see (Movie: “This is YOUR life.”)
 - It's like the typical jokes suggest: we will meet St. Peter at the pearly gates – he reviews a checklist of sorts and then we get a pass. But this is not an accurate Biblical scenario.
 - The notion of judgment is indeed scary. But 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,”* (In other words, Jesus has FULLY paid the penalty for our sins, and so when God the Father looks at us, He sees us covered by the redeeming blood of Christ).

(Cf. also Ephesians 1:7) - (This is a great statement): *“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. That is limitless.)

NOTE: So what must we conclude about this ‘judgment?’ We need to go back to what 2 Corinthians 5:10 says.

2. **‘There will be a ‘judgment seat.’** This is a Greek term: *‘Bema,’* and it’s an elevated platform that is accessed by steps.
 - It is a place of inspection, examination, and recognition.
3. Ever since the King James translation, this has mostly been rendered ‘judgment,’ and that is unfortunate for how it sounds and what that word denotes.
 - It is better to understand it as a place or location of honor (NOTE: it’s a real ‘place;’ it is not just an ‘act’ or a ‘process.’).
 - It has no connotation of penalty – instead, it’s more about authority, recognition, or dignity.
 - Outside Corinth – in Paul’s time - was large Olympic stadium. People of that day were familiar with athletes that climbed the bema platform to receive their honor.
 - The point is – every Christian (every church age saint) will climb up on the honor stand. That is really what is being said here.
 - It is not something to be afraid of. **1 Corinthians 4:5** says *...Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*”
 - While not everyone will get all – or even **some** of these rewards – the fact remains, and Paul makes this clear, **THERE ARE NO LOSERS IN CHRIST.** This is the **‘what.’**

C. Where?

1. Where is the *Bema Seat* and what is it?
 - It's in heaven. It’s not on earth. How do we know this?
 - Jesus said in **John Ch. 14**, *"I'm going to come and I'm going to get you and I'm going to take you to the Father's house."*
 - 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 - - and in heaven.
 - NOTE: This is **another** pre-Tribulation Rapture point. At the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus **physically returns to the ground of this earth**, He stays here.
 - We’re not in His Father’s house. Jesus starts his Millennial Kingdom. He’s down here where He judges those that survive the Tribulation. He restores THIS earth.
 - So, heaven is the **‘where.’**

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 at the Bema seat?
 - We know who. Paul says, *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of(now focus on the next word).....**Christ.**”*

- Furthermore, we meet Him in the air according to *1 Thessalonians 4:17*, and it says, "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Jesus Christ is the one that's going to administer the rewards.

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: the One who **made us and saved us**.

- Just the thought of standing face-to face with Jesus Christ, and hearing Him say to you and nobody else, "This is **for** you, **from** Me, for **your** faithfulness, **to** me." Overwhelming!
2. Who else? Is there anybody else? Who will all be there for this?
 - **(Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 10 again):** "For we must all appear...."
 - It's the church. It's an occasion uniquely prepared for the Bride of Christ. It's Christians. Paul includes himself as part of this crowd.
 - 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**.
 - It's not an event for OT or pre-cross saints. There is a different sequence of events for THAT crowd that we'll be learning about.
 - This is for church-age saints, again – the Bride of Christ.
 - But Jesus is the Judge. He is the **'who.'**

E. Why?

1. Why is this event taking place? It is to evaluate or test our earthly works. If there is a 'negative' in all of this – here it is: **(Cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15; READ THIS PASSAGE)**. **NOTE:** Here, the same occasion is detailed to us. Here we see some of the details that are pertinent to this judgment – or this 'Bema' seat - of Christ.
2. **First, there are two types of works** (everything we undertake here on earth falls into one of two categories). **EVERYTHING!**
 - There are the worthy works (these have value)
 - Then there are the worthless works (these have no value)
 - (NOTE: Some translations suggest 'good' and 'bad,' etc. but 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 earthly works be evaluated? (2 ways)**
 - (i) **Motives.** (That should elicit some distress, because there are many people who've done all the 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 all about our motives and our hidden desires.
- I hear that, and I am prompted to 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." **(Cf. Psalms 139:23)**
- So, the worthiness of our works will rest on our motives with them.

(ii) 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. It's different than the intention part.
- 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 to see if is worthy of reward.
- It's really about the "quality." The quality of our works will be tested by fire according to **1 Cor. 3:13**. That verse says:

"their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work."

- The question is, "Will our works endure this process? (Sort of like a stone chimney that still stands after a house fire) - If it survives the test, then we get a reward.
- In the context of this passage, our worthless works are like hay or straw – they will get burned up and disappear.
- Worthy works, however, are likened to much more precious things. They will endure the test like gold, silver, and costly stones.
- But the main issue is all our works will be tested. That's the 'why.'

NOTE: Now, can we know the specific nature of our rewards? What are they, and on what basis are they dispensed?

FIVE CROWNS ARE MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE WHICH ARE PROVIDED TO FAITHFUL BELIEVERS. THESE ARE OUR REWARDS:

Note: These are symbols of rulership and authority. The Greek word is 'stephanos' meaning a 'victor's wreath.' These crowns are provided to us based on our faithful service and our endurance that we demonstrate **while we are in this body on this earth.**

NOTE: Paul challenged Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:5** to 'fulfill your ministry.' We are to take advantage of all opportunities to use our talents and energies to maximize God's Kingdom – **and to maximize our rewards** - while we're still on earth.

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

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store 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 also **to all who have longed for his appearing.**”*

1. This is all about fighting, finishing, and fixating. We fight a GOOD fight, we finish a GOOD race, and we fixate ON our GOOD faith.
 - If we do these things the right way – (and the Lord, the righteous Judge will determine that) – then we will receive the Crown of Righteousness.
2. It is not easy to live a righteous life in our unrighteous age and on an unrighteous earth – it is a constant struggle
 - But this is our calling. We are not to be ‘conformed to the patterns of this world’ as **Romans 12:2** instructs us.
 - The sad reality is many Christians (perhaps ‘most’) are not used by God as they could be because they do not live a ‘righteous life’ **according to God’s standards.**
 - They have chosen instead to ‘conform to the patterns of this world.’ They have chosen a path of ‘safety in numbers.’
 - They have identified with the values and goals of this world: money, prestige, social standing, acquisitions, comfort, etc.
 - For many of these Christians, they have chosen to identify with - and be part of - this world.
 - They value ‘Christian culture’ rather than the much harder path of Christlikeness. The boxes are easier to check for them.
 - Many of them don’t want deep truth; they’d much rather have shallow devotionals. They don’t want accountability; they want impunity. They don’t want to be ‘hot’ or ‘cold;’ they’d rather be ‘lukewarm.’

VERY IMPORTANT: The truth is we are enabled to live correctly when we view Christ’s return correctly.

- This text in **2 Tim.** says it is all about Christ’s ‘appearing,’ not His coming.
 - It concerns His judgement of believers, not His judgment of sinners.
 - It is associated with the rewards WE will get, not the penalties which the unsaved will get.
 - This passage in **2 Timothy 4:7-8** makes these points quite clear.
- These realities should drive us to live the sort of life God that would approve of.
 - It’s that ‘imminency’ issue again: The Rapture could come at ‘any moment.’ It is unexpected, and so we are to “*long for His appearing.*”

- Recall, Paul expected the Rapture in his time – we already learned that about him. Here we learn more details about this expectant posture.
- This truth helps our ambitions to live in a way that God approves.

NOTE: There is something clearly implied here that we should not overlook. **It is this:** The Crown of Righteousness will **not** be given to anyone who dilutes, derides, or otherwise discounts the prophetic Scriptures - - it won't be given to these folks, and that is based on the clarity of this text.

- Considering that some studies show 98% of pastors do NOT teach Bible prophecy, considering that most Christians and churches look down on Bible prophecy, then we can surmise that this Crown of Righteousness will be given to a select few.
- When I look forward to the imminent Rapture – and I do! – I am showing faithfulness and I am demonstrating the **reality** and **sincerity** of my faith as I anticipate the ‘rewards’ which follow immediately after that.
- Paul complimented the new Thessalonian believers in **1 Thess. 1:10** for having the reputation of waiting “....for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, **who rescues us from the coming wrath.**”
- By simple default, this Crown of Righteousness will not be given to anyone that is **skeptical of, or condescending towards** matters which God’s Word clearly teaches.
- Those things may qualify as **ignoring, sidestepping, or disrespecting**, but they do not qualify as “*longing.*”
- The Crown of Righteousness cannot be given to anyone who mocks or scoffs at Bible prophecy, as **2 Peter 3:3-4** states are the habits of some.
- Again - Paul makes the terms for this Crown of Righteousness very clear: it will be given to all who “....*have longed for His appearing.*”

B. The Incorruptible Crown, sometimes called ‘the victor’s crown’ or ‘imperishable crown.’ (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; READ):

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

1. (Here we see Paul – again – drawing illustration from public sports and public competition). This crown is given to the faithful believer who denies himself and his personal desires. How is this done?

- By keeping our eyes on the ultimate goal (It's all about winning the greatest race of all).
- By self-discipline (This is a conscious exertion of the will over selfish temptations and temporal desires).
- By avoiding sin (And perhaps even avoiding earthly "good" things that other believers would much rather have in their present lives).
- By rigorously training and getting one's priorities right (This means the Incorruptible Crown is likely to involve some trials and challenges).

NOTE: Again, it seems few believers in this self-indulgent age will earn this crown. One who conducted himself as we ought to is Moses. **Cf. Hebrews 11:24-26; READ –**

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”

NOTE: I said earlier that OT saints are not Bema Seat participants. True. They don't get their glorified bodies till the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus returns to earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom (**Cf. Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:19; Et al**). These crowns are for church-age saints.

But, when Moses is *“looking ahead to his reward,”* it means he consciously chose to give priority to his heavenly, eternal, spiritual benefits rather than his earthy, temporal, and physical benefits. It's the same thing we should be doing. (Let's keep going....)

C. The Crown of Life

(Cf. James 1:12) *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”*

(Cf. Rev. 2:10) *“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

1. What we see from these passages is the Crown of Life is given for a proper response to tests, persecution, and trials – even to point of death!
 - For this reason, this crown is often called the ‘martyrs crown’
 - It seems to be associated with a test of the sincerity or genuineness of our faith (which is why we should ‘*consider it joy*’ as **James 1:2** says).
 - The bottom line is trials of all kinds are processes by which our present faith is tested and proven to be valid – the REAL DEAL!

- Be assured – all those who persevere under trial will be compensated well. Ultimately, the Crown of Life is given to those who live what they claim to believe.

D. The Crown of Rejoicing (Cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; READ)

*“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of **rejoicing**? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (NOTE: other translations: exultation, glorying, boasting)*

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

E. (Last one): The Crown of Glory (sometimes called the ‘Elders Crown’)

(Cf. 1 Peter 5:1-4) – *“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”*

1. The Crown of Glory appears to be a special crown given to those who teach God’s Word, who serve other believers, and who watch over the saints.
 - **IMPORTANT:** This crown is not provided just for title’s sake or job description, but for faithful service (Again - it boils down to motives).
 - Note the important criteria for such people to gain this crown:
 - **Be shepherds** – that means lay aside your own wishes and ambitions to watch out for the spiritual welfare of others.
 - **Not about ‘dishonest gain’** – one cannot have competing, temporary, and unrighteous motives.
 - **Eager to serve** – the right kind of service to God is one of eagerness. I’ve known people who have served reluctantly or with selfish and ulterior motives.
 - **“Not lording it over others”** – too many Elders and Christian leaders see their position as one of “power” or “personal right” (I’ve seen this repeatedly, and they risk forfeiting this specific reward if they do).

- **“Being examples”** – for sure, 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.

QUESTION: What will we do with our crowns when we receive them?

1. One thing is for sure – we won’t go around comparing ‘who has how many crowns.’
2. The Bible says, in **Revelations 4:10-11**, that we will ‘*lay them down*’ or ‘*cast them down*’ **before the throne of Jesus Christ**.

“the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.””

NOTE: We are going to study the 24 Elders in this passage soon. We will see that they represent the church, IN heaven, PRIOR to the onset of the Tribulation.

3. This passage shows that, despite what we’ve done on earth to earn these crowns or these rewards, only Jesus is truly worthy of glory and honor.
4. (And so) in the heavenly throne room, and in the presence of Jesus Christ, all our good deeds and motives on earth will absolutely pale in comparison.
5. Our crowns will seem insignificant to us, and so we will be desirous to give them back to Christ who gave His life for us.
6. We will be so overcome with praise and gratitude, that giving our crowns back to Jesus Christ will be our greatest worship at that time.
7. So, it is suggested that we’re not going to hang on to our crowns. We won’t want to. We’ll want to give them back to God.

Conclusion: *We need to consciously ‘lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven’ (Cf. Matt. 6:19-21; READ).* Again - the fact remains that the things we do on earth matter if we are truly “saved in Christ.” **This moment, too, is part of eternity.**



Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God’s Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don’t pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don’t teach what is NOT there. Don’t force a passage to mean something it really doesn’t.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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