



## ARE YOU MOTIVATED BY YOUR FUTURE?

TO: LEGISLATORS

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**E**schatology is the big theological word that encases the study of future events as recorded in the Bible. It is no secret that noble, Bible-believing Christians hold divergent viewpoints on what the Scriptures teach concerning the specifics surrounding the second coming of Christ.

One thing however that most believers do agree on is that the study of the believer's personal future – as depicted in the Bible – should prove to be highly motivational and directive in the here and now.

The insights from Scripture that follow are the same compelling forces that led me into full time ministry years ago. I think you, too, will find this study quite compelling, directional and motivational. I couldn't get away from the gravity and significance of these passages relative to viewing my life with an eternal perspective – all in preparation for what Scripture calls the Bema Seat Judgment. After studying this subject I couldn't simply spend or waste my life on superfluous activities that are so often of lesser significance. I pray God will use this study in your own life in a similar, profound way. Read on.

**WEEKLY MEMBERS BIBLE STUDY**

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF  
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## ESCHATOLOGY: ARE YOU MOTIVATED BY YOUR FUTURE?

### I. INTRODUCTION

Are you spending, wasting, or investing your life? Are you having the maximum impact on the maximum amount of people for all of eternity? These are huge, sobering questions that require solitude, introspection, prayer and sobriety in order to answer with integrity.

I ask you to gather your courage and submerge yourself into these passages – how will you adjust or refine your life’s direction as a result of digesting what follows?

### II. THE DATA ABOUT REWARDS

The apostle Paul wrote 2Corinthians 5:10 to *believers* at the church in Corinth. He states,

***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.***

In very plain, straightforward language Paul is communicating that every believer will undergo a judgment—not to determine if one will go to heaven or hell (*The Great White Throne Judgment* is different and is for unbelievers and takes place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, cf. Rev. 20:12) but to determine the believer’s rewards and the breadth of their reign in the Millennial kingdom. This judgment of believers is termed *The Bema Seat Judgment* and occurs after the rapture of the Church and prior to Christ’s Second Coming with His saints wherein He will set up His throne in Jerusalem and reign with His bride, the Church, for 1000 years. In regards to this, at the end of Revelation 20:4, the Apostle John states, “and [the believers] reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” Most interestingly, the word here for **reigned** *ebasileusan* is the verb form of the noun *Basileus* that means, “King.” Kings and reigning go together. (In English we say “Bakers” (noun) “bake” (verb);

“Gardeners garden;” and “Climbers climb,” but we don’t say (as they do in biblical Greek) that “Kings king.” In English we say “Kings reign” and that’s how it’s translated here in the Updated New American Standard.

Revelation 20 goes on to declare that all believers in the future “shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall *reign* with Him a thousand years” (20:6). Implicit in the context, and borne out by these and other passages, is that believers will be judged and recompensed according to their faithfulness and obedience to Scripture in this life and that their reward – specifically the breadth of their reign as Kings under the King of Kings in the Millennium – will be directly related to, and proportional to their actions during their earthly lifetime. Take heed. Make no mistake about it, states Romans 14:12, regarding believers at the Bema Seat Judgment,

***So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.***

Whereas salvation itself is based on Christ’s work on our behalf: “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourself...” (Eph. 2:8-9), these passages teach...

**EACH BELIEVER’S REWARDS ARE BASED ON HIS OR HER RESPONSIVE FAITHFULNESS AND INDUSTRIOUSNESS IN CHRIST**

This represents some of the pertinent data regarding rewards that infers and leads to the fact that there are degrees of rewards...

### III. THE DEGREES OF REWARDS

At the Bema Seat Judgment there will be various degrees of reward. Paul makes this evident in 1Corinthians 3:12-15:

***Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become***



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***evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.***

This passage is pregnant with truth related to this week's study. First, the word **foundation** is a reference to the corporate Body of Christ (cf. Eph. 2:20) and contextually relates what follows to the implied idea of expanding the Body of Christ, both God's Kingdom, here on earth, and in eternity. This passage then, pertains to how one is to best go about doing that. **Gold, silver** and **precious stones** represent effective, dedicated spiritual service done correctly, with the aim at building up the Body of Christ. On the other hand, **wood, hay** and **straw** represent shallow activities in a believer's life, a life that is bent on pursuing worthless things with no aim, sight or tangency to matters of eternal value or significance. I.e. these are selfish saints whose concerns are other than God's.

The **fire** connotes God's discerning judgment regarding the aforementioned. What endures His **testing** are those things that survive His scrutiny and judgment – those things that the believer has been accomplished in His power for His glory (cf. Matt. 25:21, 23; 2Cor. 5:9; Phil. 3:13, 14; 1Thes. 2:19, 20; 2Tim. 4:7, 8; James 1:12; 1Peter 5:4; Rev. 22:12). Lastly note that this passage also underscores a point previously made: that the believer's eternal security is not in question here. Rather Scripture is teaching that:

**THERE ARE DEGREES OF REWARDS FOR BELIEVERS – AND THEY INCLUDE THE BREADTH OF ONE'S REIGN DURING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM**

The biblical concept regarding the believer's breadth of reign is conveyed by Jesus's parable in

Luke 19:11-27. Specifically note verses 17-23 that follow:

***And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' 'The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' 'And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' 'Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept, put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' 'He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? 'Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'***

This is a profound parable containing many insights into God's expectations regarding His chosen ones; His called out saints, His Kingdom builders. Save explaining the whole of the parable, it is quite easy to capture the concept that Jesus meant to communicate that there are varying degrees of rewards bestowed by Himself in relationship to the faithfulness of a servant. And it is not a far-fetched conclusion to take the ruling over cities as a King in a literal sense, given the previously made connection between the words **reign** and **King** in the book of Revelation, i.e. the reigning of Christians as Kings under the King of Kings is the definitively literal meaning. (Keep in mind too that the similar source is Jesus in both the parable as recorded by Luke and in Revelation, and as recorded by John from Christ via an angel in Rev. 1:1,2).

(To interpret these passages figuratively, when the text provides no indication of the author's intent

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for such, is to cavalierly change one's hermeneutical approach to Scripture – from the Grammatical-Historical-Normative school of interpretation to a Figurative approach for no particular reason or justification).

Given what we have learned so far, the following four questions are in order:

**ARE YOU PREPARING TO REIGN  
ETERNALLY?**

**WHAT WILL YOUR MASTER SAY AT YOUR  
JUDGMENT?**

**WHAT CATEGORY OF REWARDS WILL HE  
APPLY TO YOU?**

**WHAT WILL BE THE BREADTH OF YOUR  
REIGN?**

The answers to these four questions directly relate to your faithfulness to the living and written Word while here on earth.

There are an overwhelming amount of other passages that punctuate the concept of rewards relative to a believer's faithfulness today...so many passages so as to make this point scream out at you from the pages of Holy Writ! Note some of the following:

**A. MATTHEW 6:20-21**

***But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

**B. LUKE 6:22-23**

***Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. "Be glad in that day and leap for***

***joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.***

**C. LUKE 12:18-21**

***Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." "But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."***

**D. LUKE 12: 42-44**

***And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.***

**E. 1CORINTHIANS 3:8**

***Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.***

**F. 1CORINTHIANS 13:3**

***And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.***

**G. GALATIANS 6:9-10**



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***Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.***

**H. EPHESIANS 6:7-8**

***With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.***

**I. COLOSSIANS 3:23-24**

***Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.***

**J. 1TIMOTHY 6:18, 19**

***Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.***

**K. 1PETER 1:4**

***to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,***

**L. 2JOHN 8**

***Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.***

**M. REVELATION 11:18**

***And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.***

**N. REVELATION 22:12**

***Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.***

Theologian Wayne Grudem says this about rewards,

It would be morally and spiritually beneficial for us to have a greater consciousness of this clear New Testament teaching on degrees of heavenly reward. Moreover, in our own lives a heartfelt seeking of future heavenly reward would motivate us to work wholeheartedly for the Lord at whatever task he calls us to, whether great or small, paid or unpaid. It would also make us long for his approval rather than for wealth or success. It would motivate us to work at building up the church on the one foundation, Jesus Christ. (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1145).

Again, these insights from Scripture are what led me into full time ministry years ago—I couldn't get away from the profundity and significance of these passages relative to investing my life for eternity...in preparation for the Bema Seat Judgment...versus spending (or wasting) my life on superfluous activities which are so often nothing but self-serving, ego-gratifying ventures.

Remember, there are degrees of rewards.

**IV. A DETAIL ABOUT REWARDS**

Now the study becomes increasingly profound. 1Corinthians 4:5 indicates that the secret sins of believers *will* be revealed during the Bema Seat Judgment. Beloved, this fact in itself should



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provide ample motivation for godly living! Note this idea in what Paul pens to believers:

***Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.***

This is an extremely informative passage that every believer should know by heart and ponder as he or she is tempted to sin. Not only will one's sins be exposed – but the very motives of the heart. This is a chilling and sobering passage.

**YOUR FINAL REWARD WILL NOT BE BASED SOLELY ON OUTWARD SERVICE, BUT ALSO ON INWARD HOLINESS**

That is to say God accounts as wood, hay, stubble outwardly right things done with inwardly wrong motives. Wow! Such truth should drive us to our knees, “search my heart Oh God!” must be our constant prayer as we seek to serve Him from a pure heart. This is an important detail worth mentioning as it pertains to the subject of the believer's rewards.

We should not move on from this passage without mentioning another important and timely insight. Don't judge another's motives! Evangelicals are too often at fault here. One can accurately measure the sin of adultery, or the robbing of a bank (outward, manifest actions in the life of another). But to attempt to judge another's motives, or heart is to enter into the world of speculation. That is God's job, not ours!

One cannot possibly know what compels another to good or bad deeds. To say things like, “this is all about him, not God” while a person sincerely attempts to serve God, illustrates the error in but one of many ways. Such spiritual immaturity also

fosters a bad Christian culture of self-righteousness. Pharisaic attitudes turn off many an onlooker. This passage specifically teaches that it's **the Lord** [who] **discloses the motives of men's hearts**, not you! Rejecting judgmentalism and realizing that judgment is God's responsibility will free you to love people more versus harboring unmerited skepticism and jaded emotions! Such easily identified attitudes are both repulsive and ugly. Remember: To judge others' motives leaves you vulnerable to God's judgment of *your* motives – and to losing His reward for otherwise faithful service.

#### **IV. THE DELIGHT REGARDING REWARDS**

Scripture is clear about the eternal security of believers, or better, the perseverance of the saints. Again, the Bema Judgment, as stated, relates to the degrees of rewards, not the finality of salvation. The true believer should have no fear of eternal condemnation. Note John 5:24 in this regard:

***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.***

States Romans 8:1....

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

The Day of Judgment for believers is a day of determining rewards, whereas for unbelievers it is a day of condemnation – since they possess no imputed righteousness from Christ, having failed to bow their knees to His Lordship. Romans 10:9 & 10 makes this clear:

***If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person***




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***believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.***

Having bowed the knee, the believer should delight in his or her eternal security! Eternal rewards then, are best understood as add-ons that we should all be compelled to achieve stemming from the realization that we are recipients of the free gift of salvation through faith in Christ! What a delight to serve a gracious God who delights in rewarding us!

### **V. CONCLUDING DELIBERATIONS CONCERNING REWARDS**

What does the book of Proverbs teach about rewards? It adds some keen, practical insights to take away from this study. Here are four things that are keys to gaining God's rewards in your life:

#### **A. OBEDIENCE GAINS REWARDS**

***Proverbs 13:13: The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, But the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.***

#### **THIS PROVERB IS STRAIGHTFORWARD ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF OBEYING GOD'S WORD IN ORDER TO ATTAIN REWARDS FROM THE MASTER**

There is not only a future reward relative to one's obedience to God's precepts—but today, as we walk in obedience to God there is a present one: States Isaiah 66:2, "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Conversely, God does not look favorably, He does not reward, those who are arrogant, proud and disobedient.

#### **B. RIGHTEOUSNESS GAINS REWARDS**

***Proverbs 13:21: Adversity pursues sinners, But the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.***

This is a general Proverb expressing a recurrent biblical theme. Unrelated to future rewards, this Proverb speaks about one's present rewards here and now: namely, what you sow in life you will also reap (cf. Hosea 8:7). This general principle within Proverbs is replete throughout the whole of the OT. Righteousness brings blessing and reward, whereas evil exacts a divine curse. The Psalmist said, "Evil shall hunt the violent man and overthrow him." In contrast, the righteous are recipients of His grace. Proverbs 11:18 and 22:4 highlight this principle respectively,

***The wicked man earns deceptive wages, But he who sows righteousness gets a true reward***

***The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life.***

#### **C. LOVING YOUR ENEMIES GAINS REWARDS**

***Proverbs 25:21 & 22: If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the LORD will reward you.***

An ancient Egyptian custom was to carry coals on one's head (in a pan) in order to publicly display contrition. Why coals? They outwardly symbolized the burning pain of shame, guilt and repentance going on inside the person's mind and heart. Accordingly, when one proactively and publicly loves his enemies, it should bring shame to the offending party relative to their actions of hatred. Further, Paul quotes this Proverb in Romans 12:20 in the context of repaying no one with evil for evil (12:17). "If possible" he says, "be at peace with all men" (12:18). When one possesses this strength of



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character, self-control and discipline, God will, if not immediately, eventually reward you – it is a promise of Scripture!

John F. Kennedy famously said, “Don’t get mad; get even.” That’s witty, but it’s patently opposite of what Scripture states should be our response. In Romans 12, God promises that *He* will bring vengeance on the offender. My experience is that when I follow this teaching, the retribution by God is much more severe and effective than anything I could have initiated. Left to Him, He promises to repay (cf. 12:19). The Lord will reward you if you respond with outward, aggressive and deliberate *love* toward your opponents! What a wonderful (but difficult to enact) truth.

My prayer is that this study on the believer’s rewards will inform your conscience with a deep and abiding desire to live faithfully and industriously for God’s purposes and glory! Amen.

**D. PRIORITIZING GAINS REWARDS**

***Proverbs 11:31 If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, How much more the wicked and the sinner!***

God is just and He will recompense everyone, believer and unbeliever, according to His attributes.

**IT FOLLOWS THEN THAT THERE ARE JUST DEGREES OF REWARD: TO THE SAINT WHO SERVES CHRIST MORE IN HIS EARTHLY LIFE THAN DOES ANOTHER, THE FORMER’S REWARD AND REIGN IN THE MILLENNIUM WILL BE GREATER THAN THE SLOTHFUL OR NAÏVE BELIEVER WHO DIMINISHES HIS OR HER CALLING IN CHRIST**

More pointedly, as to those who are so busy with self-centered pursuits, void of any tangency to building His Kingdom, those who have no time even for Bible study, fellowship and prayer, theirs is a life of wood, hay and stubble (although Scripture is clear they will be saved). Their reward and reign will be less than the faithful follower who in spiritual maturity is guided by an informed life of scriptural intake and habitual obedience.