

Things to Come

#8 Ruling, Reigning and Rewards

I. Introduction:

- A. Remember, our salvation and our eternal destiny is determined by our faith (not our works).

Eph. 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

Titus 3:5 "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,"

- B. However, God does speak a lot about rewards for work done in His name.

Luke 6:23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."

"Reward" (misthos) – could be translated wages (as in Matt. 20:8 and 1 Tim. 5:18)

Luke 14:14 "and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

"Repaid/Reward" (apodidomai) – could be translated to repay, to give back in return (as in Luke 10:35 and Mark 9:41)

1. There is a recompense for our behavior (Matt 16:27)

Rev. 11:18 "That nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great – and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

2. God doesn't "owe" us anything, it's in His generous, gracious nature that offers us these rewards. Look at the parable in Matt. 20:1-16.

vs. 15 "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

3. God himself is the rewarder

Heb. 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

"Rewarder" - the "misthos-apodidomai" "the rewarder who pays back your wages in return" (*A Life God Rewards*, p. 42)

4. God rewards us for a variety of godly behavior

For seeking him (Matt. 6:6, Heb. 11:6)

For being a faithful servant (Matt. 24:45-47, Col. 3:22-24)

For suffering in His name (Luke 6:22-23)

For giving generously (Matt. 6:3-4, 1 Tim 6:18-19)

For caring for others in need (Mark 9:41)

5. He not only records our actions but God also discerns our motives

1 Cor. 4:5 "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

II. The Judgment Seat of Christ – The "Bema" Seat

A. Introduction: A Seat of Authority

1. Paul before the Bema in Corinth – Acts 18:13
2. Three years later Paul writes the Church in Corinth and refers to this seat of authority in 2 Cor. 5:10.
3. Two years later, Paul again references this judgment in a letter to the Romans (Rom. 14:10-15)
4. "Give account" – show, display your behavior on earth.
5. "Revealed by fire" – be tested and shown to endure
6. "Suffer loss" – lose the reward for the activity (or lack thereof) (2 John 8)

"The Bible treats this judgment with great sobriety. It is not meaningless formality, but a monumental event in which things of eternal significance are brought to light and things of eternal consequence are put into effect." (website: Eternal Perspective Ministries www.epm.org)

B. This is a judgment for believers

Unbelievers will stand before God at the Great White Throne – see Rev. 20:11-15

C. The “Bema” Seat

Note: Paul loved to use sports analogies: Wrestling – Eph. 6:12, Boxing – 1 Cor. 9:26, Racing – 1 Cor. 9:24-26, etc.

1. Look at Romans 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:9-15 and 2 Cor. 5:10
2. “In the large Olympic arenas, there was an elevated seat on which the judge of the contest sat. After the contests were over, the successful competitors would assemble before the *bema* to receive their rewards or crowns. The *bema* was not a judicial bench where someone was condemned; it was a reward seat. Likewise, the Christian life is a race, and the divine umpire is watching every contest. After the church has run her course, He will gather every member before the *bema* for the purpose of examining each one and giving the proper reward to each.” (Lehman Strauss, God’s Plan for the Future, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 111 – used by permission)
3. The purpose of the bema judgment:
 - a) Negative considerations:
 - 1) The purpose of the *bema* judgment is not to determine whether a particular individual enters heaven or not, for every man’s eternal destiny is already determined before he leaves this life.
 - 2) The purpose of the *bema* judgment is not to punish believers for sins committed either before or after their salvation. The Scriptures are very clear that no child of God will have to answer for his sins after this life. Look at Psalm 103:10-12, Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 44:22, Micah 7:19, 1 John 1:7, Hebrews 8:12.
 - b) Positive considerations:
 - 1) All stewards (1 Cor. 4:2) will stand before their Lord and Master and be required to give an account of the way they have used their privileges and responsibility from the moment of their conversion.

D. What is to be tested? Our works!

See 1 Cor. 3:11 – Gold, silver, precious stones: refined by fire.
Wood, hay and stubble: consumed by fire.

E. Caution: we can lose our rewards

1 Cor. 3:15 "If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

1. We can become disqualified for rewards because of our unfaithfulness (Matt. 25:28-29)
2. We can become disqualified for rewards because of our moral and spiritual compromise (1 Cor. 9:27)
3. We can become disqualified for rewards because we lead an unproductive life (1 Cor. 3:10-15)
4. We can become disqualified for rewards because we pursue our reward from men and not God (Matt. 6:5-6 and John 5:44)

III. So what? Let's get motivated....

1 Cor. 9:24-25 "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 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."

Gal. 6:9-10 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."