

## Tears in Heaven?

Revelation 21:4, *"And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes"*

The words "*tears*" and "*heaven*" certainly don't seem to belong together. Like war and peace, light and darkness, health and sickness, these simply don't seem to coexist.

What would cause tears in heaven? When we reflect on how we lived for Christ, Who has purchased us at such a high cost, there will be tears on the other side of the celestial gates. There will be tears of regret and shame, tears of remorse for lives lived for ourselves rather than for Jesus Christ Who "*loves us, and gave Himself for us.*"

The Judgment Seat of Christ is almost universally ignored among Christians. Many Christians somehow feel that it will be an insignificant event hardly worth talking about.

There are a lot of false assumptions concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ. Until we set aside this opinions, dislodge this false impressions that die hard, we will never understand the rich teaching of the Bible on this subject. This doctrine can transformed our lives and make an impact on our daily living.

### 1.

One of the misconceptions that leads the list is the belief that because Christ has forgiven us all of our sins, as far as God is concerned, our past failures and sins do not exist. Of course, this is true when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, however, after we become a child of God, we are expected to live according to God's Word. How many of us can say that we have **always** lived according to God's Word?

Listen to what Paul says, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."* (2 Corinthians 5:10)

All believers will not pass the judgment seat of Christ with flying colors. The phrase, *"whether good or bad,"* rids us of the cherished hope that our unconfessed failures can never return to haunt us. There will be those who have been redeemed, eternally forgiven and have salvation, however, we cannot Scripturally conclude that every Christian will do well as the Judgment Seat of Christ. We can "*suffer lost!*" There will be those who "*stand in shame before Christ*" as they see their life pass before them. Those who think that the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a ten minute confrontation, with little significance . . . (that all Christians will essentially receive the same reward) . . . will have a rude awakening. What happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ will have permanent consequences.

There will be degrees of punishment in hell and degrees of reward in heaven. That does not mean that heaven will be divided into the haves and the have-nots. Everyone will be happy in heaven, especially after God will "*wipe all tears from our eyes.*" I do believe that, even through there will not be sadness, sorrow nor heartaches in our eternal home, there will be degrees of "*the ability to enjoy the bliss of heaven.*" We will not all have the same privileges in Christ's kingdom, because the way we live down here on earth will have a ripple effect that will go on in eternity.

There is no contradiction between the teaching of "*justification by faith*" and the related fact that "*we will be judged for all our deeds done in the body*" since our conversion.

## 2.

Another misconception is the belief that even after we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior our works have no merit before God. It is true we are "*saved by grace alone*" and not by any works which we can do. When we put our faith in Christ we are declared righteous by God because of Christ and not because of our works. Our deeds before conversion are of no merit in the sight of God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that no of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*"

Anyone who believes that he can be saved because of human effort, will be tragically disappointed for all of eternity. However, once we have receive the free gift of eternal life, *works* are important to God.

Notice the verse following Ephesians 2:9, that is, verse 10. After affirming that we are saved by faith alone because of God's grace, Paul continues, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" God seeks works in our life that will honor Him. We should strive to please Him, and for such works we will be rewarded. We shy away from thinking that something we do has merit, Christ did not hesitate to promise that those who performed sacrificial acts would be "*repaid*" (Luke 14:14).

Our works do not have merit in and of themselves; they have merit only because we are joined to Christ. Christ takes our imperfect works and makes them acceptable to the Father. It isn't that God must pay us like an employer who has a legal obligation to pay his employee. Our good deeds are done only because God gives us the desire and the ability to do them. They are a gift of God's grace to us.

Salvation is our inheritance, however, our Christian walk is an opportunity to show our dependability while living on earth will translate into greater responsibility in Christ's kingdom. Christ will judge us on the basis of our faithfulness and our attitude on earth. Our reward will include responsibility of authority over God's possessions in Christ's kingdom

## 3.

A third misconception of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to believe that it is selfish to think of rewards as a motivation to serve Christ. True, we have no right to demand anything. Even when we have done our best, we are still unworthy servants whom God had chosen, by His grace, to reward us for what we have no right to either demand or expect. We are rewarded because of God's generosity, not His obligation. The argument is, that it is wrong to expect reward because we ought to serve God out of love, and love alone.

Some say, "*Will we not cast our crowns before Christ anyway, so our rewards won't mean much beyond our initial meeting with Christ.*" This misconception is based on the

assumption that the rewards are nothing more than the "*crowns*" themselves. It is true that rewards are spoken of symbolically as "*crowns*," however, the rewards themselves have to do with levels of responsibility that will be given to us. Regardless of what we do with our crowns, our rewards will reach into eternity.

Of course, we should serve God because He is God and worthy of our devotion. Yes, we should serve Him because we love Him and not just because we are wanting a better position in His kingdom. We are His servant and, of course, we should serve Him, expecting nothing in return.

There are more than just one motivations for serving Christ. Love is one, fear is another. Another motivation for serving Christ is a strong desire to please Him. Christ, Who is eager to share His inheritance with us, we want to please Him. It is not selfish to want Christ's approval. Christ wants us to win the right to rule with Him in His kingdom and that should be our passionate yearning. A sportsman, who loves the game, will give his best, but he will especially be motivated if he knows the coach whom he loves and chosen to openly reward the faithful.

Look at the connection Paul makes between pleasing Christ and doing well at the Judgment Seat of Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:9-10, *"Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him, **For** we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ."*

- Do you want to hear Christ say to you at the Judgment Seat, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant?"*
- Don't you want to live in such a way that Christ would count you worthy to rule with Him?

Obviously no credit goes to us. Ruling with Christ will have no overtones of pride or self-seeking. Being *"found worthy,"* because we love Christ was Paul's desire and should be ours.

Christ often and unapologetically motivated His followers with the prospect of rewards. He told them that they should put their treasures in heaven where their money would have more security and a better rate of return.

Matthew 6:20, *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal"*

Luke 6:23, 25, *"The reward for sacrificially obedience will be great,"* and Hebrews 10:35.

Look at the Biblical saints who were driven to serve God because of the prospect of a reward. Abraham was willing to leave Ur and live in tents, *"for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God"* (Hebrew 11:10). God's Word tell us that Abraham died without having received the promise, but it was this promise that motivated him to obey God. He was rewarded in the life to come.

Moses was willing to leave the treasures of Egypt, *"choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward"* (Hebrew 11:25-26). A careful calculation made him realize that it made sense to give up the visible earthly reward for the invisible future reward. Anyone who exchanges a lesser reward for a greater one is wise.

Paul feared that he might fail and thus be disqualified in the race of life (1 Corinthians 9:27). He urged believers to prove themselves to be blameless in their perverse generation, *"holding fast the Word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain or toil in vain"* (Philippians 2:16). Paul was motivating believers to do well *"in the day of Christ."* Paul says that he wanted *"cause to glory"* in the life to come.

[It was not pride that Paul is speaking of, but, rather, that he might bring *"glory"* to Jesus Christ.]

There rewards will not be *"decorative medallions"* in which we will take pride. The deepest reward is in the very fact that we have become what our Creator intended us to become. It is the reward of being made into the likeness of Christ. When we will be like Him, we will be qualified to share with Him in the inheritance, and to work with Him in important positions of

high responsibility over the whole universe. Our rewards will be a continuation of our responsibilities begun on earth. Those who are unfaithful, and that have not repented . . . and become *faithful* servants of Christ . . . will "*suffer lose*."

Do you believe that Christ will assign the same rank in glory, the same degree of joy to a lazy, indolent and unfaithful Christian as He will to the ardent, devoted, self-denying Christian?

If this life is a training ground for greater responsibilities, then we will be thoroughly judged; and, in eternity, we will differ in glory as light bulbs differ in brightness.

Heaven will not be the same for everyone. The way we live here will have eternal, unchangeable, and profound consequences. A cup of cold water given in the name of Christ will not be forgotten; nor will the faithless, self-indulgent Christian inherit the full blessings of the kingdom.

***The person I am becoming today, is preparing me for the person I will be for all of eternity.*** Much will change about us in eternity, but much will also remain the same. Only in this life can we impact our eternity. Let the reality of standing before Jesus Christ sink into our consciousness. - **Just Christ and you. Just Christ and me.**

The Judgment Seat of Christ will take place when Christ returns to take all believers to be in heaven with Him. The purpose of this judgment will be to evaluate us so that we can be properly rewarded for the way we have faithfully (or unfaithfully) served here on earth. All who appear at this judgment will be in heaven, but the question that needs to be settled is the extent of our rule (if any) with Christ.

The Great White Throne Judgment convenes many years later, just before the final phase of the beginning of eternity. All who appear here will be thrown into the lake of fire, or what is called hell. The purpose of this judgment is to assess the degree of punishment that will be experienced for all of eternity.

The idea that everyone will appear before God to determine whether we go to heaven or hell, has no Scriptural bases at all.

At death, those who know Christ as their Savior go directly to heaven eventually to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who do not know Him go to a place called hades and will eventually be brought before God at the Great White Throne Judgment. Either way, everyone will encounter God. That you will appear before God is more certain than the sunrise. And the judgment at which you will be summoned is determined in this life, based on your relationship with Christ. There is no opportunity to reroute your travel plans after you have died. The moment you die your eternal destination is unalterably fixed.

Standing at the Great White Throne Judgment will be hordes from every country of the world, from every religion in the world, with the best intentions in the world. They will learn too late that God is serious about justice, and if Christ does not bear their punishment, they must bear their own. And since it is not possible for them to now accept Christ on the other side of death, they will be "*thrown into the lake of fire*" (Revelation 20:15).

If you are not sure at which judgment you name will be called, you still have the opportunity to settle the matter. You must admit your sinfulness and transfer all your trust to Christ alone, for only He can fit you for heaven.

John 3:36, "*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*"

The purpose of this series of message is to make known to everyone who listens that "***the person they are today will determine the rewards they will receive in heaven.***" Those who are pleasing to Christ will be generously rewarded, those who are not pleasing to Him will receive negative consequences and a lesser reward. Our life ***here*** will impact our life ***there*** forever.

If the knowledge that we will give an account to Christ "*for the deeds down in the body...whether good or bad*" (2 Corinthians 5:10), does not motivate us to faithful living, it is quite possible that nothing else will. We must face the question of how much we really do love Christ. In that day there will be no place to hide.

Resist the temptation to think about how others might fare while standing in Christ's presence. Indeed no doctrine should make us more hesitant to judge our bothers and sisters, because we shall stand before the same Christ as they. Don't try to do God's work of judgment. There is a place for church discipline, but there is no place for a critical, unforgiving, judgmental spirit.

Resist the temptation to hide behind some preconceived theological bias that renders the Judgment Seat of Christ of little consequence. Listen with an open mind, willing to grapple with the full impact of what God has revealed. I want to continue to expose those misinterpretations that have weakened the Biblical teaching on the subject.

We are on a journey that will challenge our thinking and, I pray, change our life. Let's prepare for that day when you and I will be alone with Christ; just reality and no pretense. It ought to be our business of every day to prepare for our last day.