***Eternal Rewards

RV251-01***

Preparing for the End. Segment Number Two. Revelation 22:10-12.

The vision of the apostle John centering on the Tribulation era before the Second Coming of Christ is concluded at Revelation 20:15. Then Revelation 21:1-22:5 gives a picture of eternity and the New Jerusalem residence of the saints. Revelation 22:6-21, which conclude the book, deal with some final words of admonition about one's attitude toward the Book of the Revelation itself. One of the things we're told is that there's a special blessing of God that rests upon all believers who act upon the prophetic preview found in Revelation. Revelation, we were told, was a true book without error inspired by God the Holy Spirit. It is to be understood literally. John, in Revelation 22:10, is told not to keep the book secret, but to get its awesome message to the believers.

Time for the fulfillment of revelation, we're told, is in close proximity. That is close proximity to the Church Age, specifically the Rapture of the Church, because once the Rapture takes place, the Tribulation begins. Therefore, it is a near event and it is near in the terms of the fact that it is the next thing in line. The time of fulfillment, is at hand therefore. This does not necessarily mean soon, but it does mean that all is in place in God's plan for Revelation to be fulfilled. Once it is time for the Christians to be removed, the book goes into operation. Events will move rapidly then once the church is enraptured and the Holy Spirit's restraint is removed from the world. Please remember that, when the Church leaves, the Holy Spirit that indwells believers, moves from His presence here. He is still here omnipresently, but He moves from His presence here, and the world is now free to be as evil as it wishes. Now, the Word of God tells us, the Holy Spirit restrains evil. In large part, He does that through believers themselves.

**The Wicked Will be Wicked**

Revelation 22:11, we have here the chosen lifestyle, "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong, and let the one who is filthy; still be filthy;" "Let the one who does wrong" refers to those who are unrighteous. It's the Greek word adikeo a d i k e o, a word that refers to sins against God. It's a person who's unrighteous in his conduct by God's standards of righteousness. It is in the present tense which tells us that this is always a condition of these people. It is active voice, which tells us that they have chosen to do this, to be righteous. It's a spiritual principle being enunciated here. And here the angels proclaims to John, let these people who are unrighteous still keep on being unrighteous.

The second word is the same word again, adikeo, but this time the word has a little different grammatical form. It is at the point of their negative choice, it is once more their active personal decision, but this time it's a command. So verse 10 has declared to us that The Book of the Revelation is a book which is open to understanding. And each person's response, therefore, to the Revelations message is going to be shown by his conduct.

That's the point here. Unbelievers think that the Book of the Revelation is too negative: too negative in its view of mankind, too negative toward its attitude toward world unity and a world government, so dismiss the book as unbecoming men of intellect. If this prophecy of the world's end is dismissed however, there's no more message from God with authority that will affect human conduct. Those who are negative to the message of Revelation will practice unrighteousness because they have no fear of the terrible judgments that are described in this book. Revelation causes in some people a spirit of ridicule and of anger resulting in a life of rebellion. So, they are wicked and they are the people who are in view here in verse 11, the one who does wrong, the one who is unrighteous, the one who is in rebellion against this book, may it be reflected by his attitude. And this attitude will be toward the Word of God as a whole, for the Word of God is divine authority, which is binding upon people. Revelation must be taught as the Word of God, even though unbelievers will destroy themselves over it.

So, the Spirit of God says those of you who are rejecters of what I have revealed in this book, you are going to live in an unrighteous way and just go ahead and keep on doing that. There will be terrible consequences, but just go ahead and keep on living that way.

Then it uses another word, this word filthy. This is a word that refers to all kinds of moral and sexual degradation. It is the things which God calls an abomination to Himself, things that He loathes horribly, and those who live that way are also told to keep right on practicing their morally vial acts. These too are the product of the indifference toward the message of Revelation. Here again, it is at the point of their negative volition. The unbeliever is a victim of his Old Sin Nature blindness. So, he's the victim here. This is shown in the grammar because this is not active. This is not a choice. It's passive. He can't help himself. A person who is an unbeliever does things that are filthy. And it is a command again, a command to these perishing people to keep on doing what you're doing. Why? Because God is nothing more to say in terms of warning unbelievers about the doom that awaits them in the Tribulation world.

So, there is no neutral ground toward believing this book. So, the rejecters should plan to be themselves, in their unrighteousness, and in their filthiness. In the Lake of Fire throughout eternity, the wicked will continue to be what they are in their unrighteousness, in their moral filthiness, finding no satisfaction, nor rest for their tormented souls. People act according to what they are. When you see and hear news reports of terrible things that are happening, the terrible things that people do, they're just being themselves; as the song title says, they're doing what comes naturally. And people who are resistant to the Book of the Revelation because it is such a terrible book and what it describes at the end of mankind is not complimentary to mankind at all. It is very insulting to those who think of themselves as sophisticated, educated and powerful people, and they are above this kind of nonsense.

During the recent elections, when the non-Socialist Party was put in power over Congress, the Socialist contingent, which controls all of the major news media, one of the newsmen on one of the major media said "What we have observed is that the voters acted like a bunch of 2 year olds and they've had a temper tantrum." He said "And that's no way to run a country." But a lot of people think that the 2 year olds with their temper tantrums have promise of doing it a whole lot better than sophisticated types like that talking head on TV news. He had no insight as to what really happened, that this was a shout for freedom. And why didn't he see it? Because you people are so stupid that you don't understand how important it is for you to be dominated, for you to have laws to make you do what is right, to keep our thumb on you in order to take care of you properly. This whole concept that is so alien to the founding of this nation, the same thing is true spiritual things.

People who are sophisticated have nothing but contempt for the Book of the Revelations. When they have contempt for that book, it spreads to the other parts of the Bible so they can find all kinds of places there that they don't think is suitable to be in the Bible. Consequently, when you start rejecting Scripture, you will start living in an unrighteous manner and you will start doing the things that are morally filthy.

**No Second Chance**

So, the point here is throughout all eternity, these people in the Lake of Fire are going to be what they are. After death, at the Great White Throne Judgment, there is no possibility for these people to alter what they are. They're still going to be unrighteous and they're still going to be filthy in the Lake of Fire. After death, there are no purgatorial fires or reincarnation to give you a chance to cleanse yourself from unrighteousness or moral filthiness. The Roman Catholics say there is, but the Bible doesn't. The Mormons say that there is a second chance, but the Bible that. Hinduism gives you a second chance with its reincarnation, but the Bible doesn't tell you that.

The truth of the matter is what the Bible does tell you is that it is appointed once a man once to die, and then the music begins: then the judgment, then the fat hits the fan. What one sows toward the true prophecy of Revelation as a representation of the Word of God, he will reap forever. The lost, who will be in the Lake of Fire, are separated from God. They are separated from the redeemed. So, they have no religious right presence to inspire them to ennoble their Lake of Fire community with holy conduct. It will be a living hell. They will be as unrighteous in the Lake of Fire as they ever were, even worse. They will be as filthy in the Lake of Fire as they ever were. And they will shake their fists at God and they will curse Him. They have lost it all and there is no restraint. But they will find no peace for their souls. The Bible tells us, day or night they will be in agony, and there won't be a moment of satisfaction.

**The Righteous Will be Righteous**

On the other hand, there's another attitude toward this book that is described in the last part of verse 11, "let the one who is righteous, still price is righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." One who is righteous means the one who is compatible with God's character. This refers to the absolute righteousness which is imputed to the saved people, and it moves them to have a different attitude for the Book of the Revelation. Let these people who are righteous continue to practice their righteousness that, of course, refers to their personal conduct, to continue in something which they already are. This too, is a command from God; 'since you people are willing to take My word as I revealed it in the Book of the Revelation concerning where history is going, where mankind is going to end up, you act accordingly. You don't want to be part of that scene and therefore you have conduct which is righteous. And My word to you,' the Holy Spirit says, 'keep it up.'

Those of you who are "holy," this is a word for personal separation to God from evil: it is functioning on the basis of God's perfect justice toward evil and His standard of absolute righteousness. Holiness means that you have absolute righteousness and that you act with the justice of God. Those two factors produce holiness. Those who have a receptive attitude toward the Book of the Revelation also are impressed that it is unwise not to obey God. It is unwise not to respect the power of God. Therefore, their lives are lives that are holy. Believers in Heaven will continue to grow to the levels of the blessings of their absolute righteousness and of their holiness. As the people in Hell will continue to grow in their unrighteousness and their filthiness, so the people in Heaven will continue to discover new vistas of a blessing from the absolute righteousness that has been imputed to them and from the holiness which characterizes their lifestyle.

**Truth Brings Insights Into Both Good and Bad**

So, Revelation you see, brings great spiritual insights and blessings to some, but it brings darkness and condemnation to others. The clearer the preaching of doctrine, the greater the response to divide mankind for or against God. If the preaching is fuzzy and not clear, if the preaching does not declare the divisions that the Bible teaches, then you can get away with getting along with a lot of people. But if you take the Word of God and say, yes, this book is true, this is going to happen, and world governments and worldwide socialism and worldwide economic controls is the work of the devil.

One time in the service I had a message describing the deep things of Satan, it was called the Doctrine of Satan. And one of the things that I pointed out as one of the doctrines of Satan, was socialism. One man came up afterward, and he thought it was terrible that I would classify socialism as a doctrine of Satan. Who do you think invented that? When you look at the Word of God, it is clear that the economic system is always private property ownership, that's capitalism, that's God's system. When we look ahead to the Millennium when the world is going to be at its best, what do we find? Every man owns his own vine, his own fig tree and he has control of his own economic resources. That's the way it's going to be. It will be capitalism without its bad effects in the Millennium. So, the indignation about identifying things for what they are can be very great. When the preaching is clear on what this book teaches, then you have great separation and great indignation for and against the truth. The prophetic truth of the Book of the Revelation will confirm some more firmly in their wickedness, while others are made more determined in their godliness. Evil will remain evil and the good will remain good, and so be it.

Daniel 12:10 alludes to that same principle. Just before Daniel completes his book, Daniel 12:10 says, "Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand." What he's talking about in this context is the Tribulation era. He's talking about the world's final days and he says, those who receive the truth of doctrine, many of them will be purged. But the wicked, those who are negative, will get worse and they won't understand what's happening to them.

All humanity is, in effect, being born to test itself by the prophecy of Revelation to determine its final destiny. The preaching of the Book of the Revelation is good for some, bad for others. True doctrinal exposition always makes the hearers better or worse. If doctrine does not melt the heart towards God, it hardens it toward Him. If doctrine does not create peace in the soul, it creates turmoil. If doctrine does not bring life, then it brings death. Evil people will dominate the Tribulation, will express their contempt for God, shake their fists at Him, and crush all the believers that they can, in order to demonstrate that even when they are experiencing what this Book of Revelation has told us is coming, they're going to be negative toward it. You would think that they would read it and say 'this is exactly what we were told was going to happen; we are in the midst of this terrible condition; we are the victims of the antichrist and his world,' and they would flee to God. Some people will. Many will be saved, undoubtedly, as they read this book and realize that it is coming to pass. Everyone is going to act in keeping with his own character. What he is in his soul will have inevitable consequences.

**Act Now! He's Coming Soon!**

Revelation 22:11 you will notice, interestingly comes between two verses which stress urgency of action, Notice in verse 10, he is told not to seal up this book because the time is near. Things are ready to be set in motion. Look at verse 12, "Behold, I am coming quickly." That is an urgency point and therefore it is told to get squared with how you're living your life. So verse 11 comes sandwiched between these two acts of urgency, and verse 11 guides us to the Word of God as a deciding factor for us to act in our urgency.

We act one way or the other. In view of the certainty and the imminency of the return of Christ, all men should evaluate their beliefs and their consequent lives in view of the Revelation judgments and blessings of God to come.

**Eternal Rewards**

They conclude this section with verse 12. Verse 12 touches a subject that is very important to all of us and one that we continually need to be reminded of, and that is our rewards for our service.

He begins with a Greek word that always announces the signal that some great declaration is about to be made. It looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the word idou, i d o u: idou is an exclamation. It announces that an important principle is about to be stated. Here it says "Behold, I am coming." This is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking. What He is referring to here is what is explained in detail for us in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. Let me read them for you again. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep. [The technical term for Christians who have died,] that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. [That is the unbelievers.] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. [That's the term for Christian death.] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. [or go ahead into the Lord's presence before those Christians who have died,] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven [and with the spirit and souls of dead Christians,] with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

The bodies of all those Christians who are in the graves will come to life, and they will leap out into outer space and be rejoined with their souls and spirits. Then we Christians who are alive at that time shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. This is the event which we described as the Rapture. The word rapture means the "catching away." This is the thing that we talk about as being imminent; it could happen at any moment. There is nothing that is standing in the way of this event taking place. He calls to their attention, and I remind you that the book [Revelation] is shutting down. The book is closing down. He's finishing his letter. What do you do when you write a letter? How often do you go through your mind and say, 'what is that I want to put as an emphasis?' And then when you finish the letter, you think, oh, a postscript, and you put down one thing more that you thought of. What do you do? You're putting down those things that are most important, things you want to emphasize, the last things you want to say that you want people to remember.

People who teach us how to write good letters tell us always to have a postscript, because that little punchy end is going to stick in people's minds as the important things. The whole end of this book is a postscript. What is he emphasizing? Of all the things that could be emphasized, rewards for Christians comes up. That's the emphasis of this book and that is significant. For you to be storing treasures in Heaven via your Christian service is an important matter with God, and it should be a very important matter with us.

Jesus promises six times in the Book of the Revelation to return, and when He comes, to do it with great rapidity, quickly. Two times, He gives this as a warning. In Revelation 2:5, and Revelations 2:16 He says, 'I'm going to come, and when I come it's going to be with rapidity. I'll come very quickly and then I'm going to judge you.' So, those two are warnings. But four times in this book, He promises His return is a great blessing: Revelation 3:11, Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:12, the verse that we're looking at, and Revelation 22:20. Those four verses talk about His return with great suddenness as a blessing. Two times in the Book of the Revelation He refers to His return as a thief would return, a sudden and unexpected: Revelation 3:3, Revelation 16:15.

So, the coming of Jesus is very prominent in this book. He constantly reminds us that He is coming. Why did He do that? He tells us that so that we are prepared for that arrival when He comes. It is most important that we be prepared in terms of what we have done with the days of our lives. He says, "Behold, I am coming quickly." Here's that word that we studied previously, the word tachu, t a c h u; and this word means rapidity. It does not mean soon. It means once I leave Heaven, when the time is right, I will be here in the twinkling of an eye. The return of Christ is imminent. It is certain. There's nothing to hinder it from taking place at any moment now. When He does come, it will be very, very quick. This return of Christ is what we Christians look upon as our blessed hope. Titus 2:13 tells us that: "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

There are some Christians who are caught up in the idea that some people, some believers will not go to Heaven in the Rapture, only those who are in a position of spiritual quality, those who are spiritual Christians will go, the rest will be left behind. I don't know why the last generation of Christians should be punished more than the others, but this is an assumption. This is not in any way indicated in the Word of God. Everybody goes, but some will go much more prepared than others. Some will wish that they had not been left behind. But if you were left behind, how could this be a blessed hope? The blessed hope is a fact that you're going out of the tribulation and everybody, every believer is told that he has this blessed hope. This is promised to the Philadelphia church you may remember, that they would be delivered from the hour of tribulation. The Philadelphia church represents the church in our era of time.

**The Nature of Rewards**

So, the promise is 'I'm coming. When I come, in the twinkling of an eye, with rapidity, suddenly there I am, I'll be there.' [looking again at Revelation 22:12] "and My reward," the Greek looks like this: misthos, m i s t h o s. The word misthos refers to earning something by your efforts, very important that you understand that, earning something by your own efforts. This therefore, does not relate to salvation, which you do not earn, but what you receive as a free gift from God. This word refers to something that you have earned, and it comes to you as, in effect, a wage from God to pay you for what you have earned. Ephesians 2 makes it clear that this reward could not be applying to salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." You have been saved by grace. The word grace means a gift. It means a free gift. For by a free gift you've been saved through faith, through faith in Christ, and you have salvation. "And that." The word "that" refers to salvation, "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." You didn't produce that salvation by your works. Then he confirms in verse 9, "not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Only God gets the credit. So, He says [in Revelation 22:12], 'I am coming and I'm going to bring a wage, a reward with me.' Salvation, of course, is our present possession.

While rewards is something we have to wait for that is in the future, don't make any mistake about this folks, you're going to receive it. You are going to be given what you have coming: nothing more, nothing less. He makes it clear when He says, "I'm bringing My reward with Me, to render to every man." "To render" looks like this in the Greek, apodidomi, a p o d i d o m i. This word is an intense word for delivering something, giving something. It is given at the point of the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is active in its voice which means that Jesus Christ Himself is going to hand this to you. And it’s in the infinitive mood, which in the Greek tells us that this is a purpose of God. God cannot wait to reward you for what you have done in His service. This is something that the Lord looks forward to with great pleasure. It is His desire that you should earn rewards. Every now and then somebody very ignorantly says, 'Gee, that's not a very good motivation to serve God so that you can get paid in these rewards.' Yes, it is! Because that's exactly what the Lord constantly says, 'store your treasures in Heaven. Don't let anybody take your reward!' The apostle Paul on one occasion says, 'Keep yourself for the reward. You are lined up properly with your potential reward.' Why is that important? Well, it's going to be a lot nicer to be in Heaven and having an enriched eternity with rewards, whatever they may be, but it is important because what do you get rewards for? For doing God's work! And if Christians are earning rewards, then what does that tell us? It tells us that the Lord's work is being done! So, don't let anybody ever try to shame you because you say I'm knocking myself out night and day in order to earn rewards. That's exactly what you should be doing, because that's the smart thing in terms of eternity.

[continuing in Revelation 22:12] I am bringing my reward to give to every man, to every individual, "according to what he has done." And this is kind of a little bit of a tricky translation there, because the word "what" is the Greek word, "ergos," which is work, e r g o s. He says, I am bringing for what you have done! The word "done" is the verb eimi, e i m i, and is the word 'to be' so literally is "as his work is," 'I'm going to give to every person as is according to what his work is.' So, it's very clear that what he has done is a good enough translation, but it gives the idea that it is going to be what we have done, literally, 'as his work is.' After the Rapture of the Church comes the Judgment Seat of Christ. That takes place in Heaven immediately for the evaluating and rewarding of the divine good works performed in Christian Service.

**Divine or Human Good?**

We're told that's what's going to happen in 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed [So, you've got it again, paid back, receive your due, your salary, what you've earned,] for his deeds in the body [your work], according to what he has done, whether good or bad." A Christian’s works are going to be classified. They'll be classified as divine or human good: from the Old Sin Nature and your natural abilities, or is it from the Holy Spirit's gifts and abilities that He has given you? This is amplified in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, where, we read, "each man's work will become 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 upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." Now we'll look at this in a moment a little more carefully, but it does stress again for us that all of our works for God are going to be classified. Or your “no works” for God – that will be classified. Divine good works, guided by the Holy Spirit, as a faithful servant, will receive some kind of reward to enrich your eternity.

**Rewards For Exceptional Service**

For exceptional services, we should just mention in passing, there are certain Medals of Honor. These are in the form of crowns. Not everybody gets a crown. There are certain classes of them. One is the Crown of Rejoicing; Philippians 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 tell us about that. That is the recognition for a Christian who has lived most of his life in divine good service, who has not frittered away his life a human good, producing out of the Sin Nature. But his life has been fulfilling his mission. A Christian who has made maximum stride toward fulfilling his mission, he will be given this public recognition of the Crown of Rejoicing.

And secondly, the Crown of Righteousness, and Timothy 4:7-8 tell us about that. That is recognition for the Christian who has lived most of his life in temporal fellowship. He has logged maximum time in the status of confessed known sin.

There is the Crown of Life. We have this in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10. This is recognition for the believer who has spent maximum time at maximum spiritual maturity level, what we call Super grace. Where he is mature, he is stable, he is poised. He is capable of meeting the world on his own terms. He is not a spiritual yo-yo. He does not chase will-of-the-wisp, flying to something where it’s better or where it's at, he is just the kind of a person you love to have on your team. And that person with his spiritual maturity is the kind that we can depend upon and we can lean on, and we love him. This person deserves recognition with a Crown of Life.

Then there was the fourth crown called the Crown of Glory, 1 Peter 5:4. This crown only goes to pastor-teachers who perform faithfully in feeding doctrine to the flock so that they may themselves grow into spiritual maturity and do the work of the Lord in earning their rewards as they serve God. And as Paul tells Timothy, preach the word, and do it whether you come to a Sunday evening service, Paul says, and half the chairs are empty because the folks are home getting rested from their activities, and whatever they've been doing or moving into their other interests, take care of the sheep that have risen for the opportunity. You do not put your eyes on people, but put your eyes on the Lord. And for those who are capable of rising to that kind of consistent faithfulness, there is a recognition, the Crown of Glory.

**Unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment**

The unforgiven unbelievers will also, as you know, have their works evaluated. This will be at the Great White Throne Judgment. These are the works they have offered to God to merit salvation. They're all recorded. When they are brought forth, the result will be that they are totally short of securing absolute righteousness and they will be condemned. Revelation 20:11-15 tells us that: "And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them." Then it tells how the Book of Life is opened and the Lamb's Book of Life is opened, and He finds if their names are missing. All the dead are raised from wherever their bodies have gone to and have been deteriorated, whether on land or sea. Then death and Hades, which holds the souls of these unbelievers, is poured into the Lake of Fire. Verse 15 says "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, [the Lamb's book of life,] he was thrown into the Lake of Fire." For the unbelievers who loved to portray their works as meriting their stand with God, they are going to find that they are going to be judged on their works. God says, "Okay, you want to be judged on your work. Just look at them. All of our works on the human level are contaminated by the sin nature. That's why you can't bring one single thing that is acceptable to God.

**God Stresses Eternal Rewards**

One of the things stressed here at the end of the Revelation then is Christian Service for eternal reward. Just looking ahead for a moment, it is interesting that in His final postscript to this book, what's the other great emphasis? Verse 14, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and they enter by the gates into the city." Isn't it interesting that this whole book and the terror that's coming upon humanity, God closes it by stressing two things. Christians use your time, use your abilities, use your spiritual gifts, use your money to store your treasures in Heaven. Do it now, don't wait. Secondly, be sure that you have done the first thing, that you have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb, that you have personal salvation. So, salvation and service are the two things that are stressed. This comes in here at the point of completing the message of this book.

Let's tie this up by going back to 2 Corinthians 5:10. 2 Corinthians 5:10 tells us that this judgment is coming upon us, "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad." A Christian is going to face judgment after he comes into the Lord's presence after the Rapture. The context of chapter 5 here indicates that this is speaking to Christians. Verse 1 talks about people who have a house in Heaven, that's Christians. Verse 5 speaks about being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that's Christians. Verse 8 talks about being absent from the body and with the Lord, that's Christians. So, we know that when we come to verse 10, he is talking about believers. This is not a judgment relative to whether you're going to be saved or not. This is a judgment for those who already are in Christ to determine something else, not their qualification for Heaven, but the status of their reward. It is a judgment for that, and that alone. It is not a judgment even for the Christian's unconfessed sins, the Christian's unconfessed sins that kept him out of temporal fellowship, and he pays the price for that. Because he's not earning rewards when he's in that status.

Now, the nature of the Judgment Seat of Christ, and incidentally, the work for this in the Greek looks like this, it's the Bema, B e m a. The Bema in Greek means the platform and is the place where the judge sat. We call it the bench. In the Greek world when they held the Olympics, this is where the winners came. They came up before this elevated platform, the Bema, and they received their recognition with a laurel wreath, which is placed on their heads as a sign of victory. 1 Corinthians 9:24 and 25 refer to that. So, Christians are going to face some kind of a judgment before God who will be up on that platform as a judge. He will not, because they are already Christians, be facing a judgment for sin. That is never brought before the believer. But it says we must stand there for some other reason. And it says, "We must all appear, we must all, every one of us has to be there. We will not escape. We don't have any choice in the matter. We are not invited to be there. We must be there that each of us can be given what we deserve for our deeds in the body: which means through the body, whether those deeds were good, and good means beneficial in its effect, or whether they were bad, which means that they were worthless. "According to what he has done, whether good or bad." We might translate this verse in this way: 'For it is necessary for all of us to be revealed as we really are before the Judgment Seat of Christ so that each one may receive recompense in proportion to the things done through the body, whether good or bad.'

Along with this, 1 Corinthians 3, that we looked at a moment ago, gives us the rest of the story. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, "According to the grace [Paul says,] of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, [that is among the Corinthian Christians] and another is building upon it. [Somebody else is teaching you. I laid the foundation of salvation. I brought you into Christ. And other teachers are coming along and building upon that for your spiritual maturity.] But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. [So if you also are building upon your life in Christ. Paul says,] For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." In relationship to God, that's the only foundation you can have. If you don't have Jesus Christ as the foundation of your religious life, you have nothing. I don't care if you're a Jew, or a Muslim, or if you're a Hindu, or if you're a Buddhist, or if you're a Shintoist, whatever you are, all of whom reject Christ, they have no foundation religiously. They're religious with no foundation, because they have rejected Christ. The apostle Paul said that was my job. I was the evangelist. I brought you to Christ. You've got a basis for a relationship to God. But he said, that's only the foundation. You must build on that foundation. Verse 12 says, "Now if any man builds [if, first class condition, it means "since" every man does build] upon this foundation." Don't think that you will be neutral. I don't care if you don't ever do a thing, you're building something on that foundation of Christ in your life. So it's significant that this is a first class condition. Yes, you are building something. You're building some kind of works. There's going to be two kinds: indestructible works, gold, silver and precious stones or destructible works, wood, hay, and straw. Gold, silver, and precious stones, - divine good works. Wood, hay, straw - human good works. One is worth a great deal, the other is worthless. A great many Christians are going to be surprised how much of the destructible stuff they have.

One of my favorite professors at Dallas Seminary in the Greek department told us one time as we were studying this passage, that this was on his mind, so he had a dream. And his dream was that he had died and gone to the Lord's presence through the Rapture and he was standing there at the Bema ready to be checked out for his rewards. He said they brought in his service for God. And it was a truck that the backed up and it was a huge pile. He said I was just so thrilled. I looked at this pile of my good works and said this is wonderful! Then he said an angel came floating down with a torch in his hand and he set fire to the bottom of the pile. He said, to my horror in my dream, as I watched it, the fire got bigger and bigger and bigger and the pile got smaller and smaller and smaller until there was just a little pile of ashes. And he said another angel came floating down with a dust pan and a whisk broom in his hand, and he waved it over the ashes and then scraped up a few little gold, silver and precious stones. And he went up to the Lord and put them there on the Bema seat. He said, "What a picture of our self-deception."

We're doing so much for God. Are we doing it for self-glory? You see, you can walk up to that offering box and do exactly the same thing. You can access God's priest giving to the Lord's glory as He moves you, or you can do it for show and personal gratification. You can do it like the Pharisees did, or you could do it like the little widow who gave her two mites, or two copper coins. So, please don't ever get up and say that I have given the Lord my two mites. Because if you did, you've given everything. See, the Bible tells us that her two copper coins was all that she had. Jesus says, that was her living, that was her lunch, that was her survival. But God said, 'I need that in My treasury, put it in there.' Yet, Jesus said, God has seen what she gave a lot more than all the rich Pharisees who have been dumping in. But boy, have you been keeping back! You were never to the point where you say 'Lord are you really going to have to take care of me because I put it all on the line for you.' The business of rewards and the business of following the leading of the Spirit of God is no small thing.

**Our Work Will Become Evident**

So, "each man's work will become evident [verse 13 tells us,] for the day will show it [the day of the Judgment Seat of Christ] because it is to be revealed with fire;" This fire here is going to represent the testing of God's judgment. It is a word that is used to show you that God is a friendly judge. The Greek word that is used here looks like this. It's dokimazo, d o k i m a z o, and this is the word for "judging in order to find the good things." Sometimes we judge people in order to find the bad things about them. But this is a judgment that God says, 'I'm doing this to find as much good, to give you as much rewards as I can.' God is on your side. And He says, 'I'm going to test you in this way.

Each man, everybody's worth personally, will come under review. For what purpose? To test the quality of each man's work, what kind of work this was. God's test will be determined by his fiery judgment, whether these are good works, which we have produced through the Spirit of God, or whether they are human good which we produced through the sin nature. This is not a test of quantity. This is a test of quality. Whether you have hay, wood, and stubble. It doesn't matter how much you've done. It’s the quality that counts. Because you know, that pound for pound, you get a much larger pile of hay, wood, and stubble than you do in gold, silver, and precious stones, and have the same weight of the two. The worthless will be much larger. There are dead works the Bible speaks of, Hebrews 6:1 and 9:4. There are also the devil's works which are spoken of in John 8:41 and 1 John 3:8.

So what's the result? Here's a verse some people don't like. [starting 1 Corinthians 3:14] "If any man's work which he has built upon it [That is salvation, Christ] remains [after the judgment evaluation of God], he shall receive a reward." There we are back to our word, misthos, a payment, a reward. We will receive something, what, the Bible doesn't specify. Perhaps it'll be a special commendation, the Lord's "well done, Thy good and faithful servant," Matthew 25:21. Perhaps it will be believers who have been saved and matured through us, that they will be especially an honor to us, 1 Thessalonians 2:19. Perhaps it will be a position of great authority on a throne with a realm of your authority in the eternal state, Luke 19:17. Perhaps it'll be the capacity to radiate the glory of God in a very big way, Daniel 12:3 suggests that.

Some works are not going to survive God's judgment and they will be destroyed. Verse 14, "If any man's work which he has built upon it remains." That's a first class condition. Some will indeed have words which remain.

Verse 15 says "If any man's work is burned up, [that's a first class condition. There are those who will.] he shall suffer loss. There's the word, so don't kid yourself, the word is "loss." You will suffer loss. It looks like this in the Greek Bible, zemioo, z e m i o o, and this means "to forfeit." What are you forfeiting? You're forfeiting an enriched eternity! You can ignore or you take it seriously. Jesus, before He closes down on the Book of the Revelation, says, 'pay attention to your reward.' This has been made very clear by a passage just like this here in 1 Corinthians. You will at some future time experience this loss of what could have been; your pile of works will be burned to a small pile of ashes?

But he wants to make one thing clear, verse 15, the last part says, "but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." You won't be lost because you don't get the reward, but you will be saved. But even that will be through the fire of God's judgment, God's judgment upon your sin that He has taken care of. So, you see, we're talking about a Christian who's going to Heaven who will experience some kind of loss for the simple reason that he did not fulfill his mission. He did not pursue that as his life's work.

**Works that Survive God's Test**

What constitutes works that survive? It's not entirely the work itself, it's whether it is done under the filling of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is leading us into the plan of God that does produce divine good works. The carnal Christian is outside of that guidance, and he can produce all kinds of human good. There are whole churches that do nothing but social work of every kind. Yes, they feed the poor, they clothe the naked, and they house those who are homeless. They do all kinds of things. But it's a sin nature that's doing it. It is not the moving of the hand of God, therefore, that which men look upon as good is evil in the sight of the Lord.

What is indestructible is what God produces through us. Every one of you is capable of producing some very wonderful things. Just don't push Him away. Don't push Him away. Trust Him! He will carry you through. He says, "I will not forsake you. I will not abandon you." He will never let you starve. He will always take care of you. Therefore, use your capacity in every respect for this moment.

Don't be too occupied with your retirement. I could tell you some very sad stories as I've gone along in life with friends who are getting ready for their retirement. And sure enough, they got to it and then died, and left it all behind. What they could have done and what a waste it was.

**When Do We Get Rewarded?**

When is the time of this judgment? Luke 14:14 says our rewards are associated with our resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, we see, says that the resurrection is part of the Rapture event. So, therefore the rewards must come at the Rapture when we have the resurrection. Revelation 19:8 shows us that when the Church returns with Christ at the Second Coming as His bride, they're already wearing their righteousnesses they have earned by their service. So that tells us that they are rewarded during that seven-year period in Heaven while the Tribulation is taking place here on this earth. So, our rewards are associated with what the Bible calls that day when Christ comes for His own. This rewarding is sure to come. It's going to be a very happy day for some; it's going to be not quite so happy for others, but it will be there. Now, with that background, Revelation 22:12 should have much more significance to you.

[finishing up in Revelation 22:12,] "Behold [pay attention. Here is a big doctrinal principle I'm about to point out to you], I am coming quickly [I'll be there in the twinkling of an eye once I leave Heaven], and my reward is with Me, to render to every man [person] according to what he has done. [Whether it is good for the glory of God, divine good, or whether it's human good for the glory of man.]" But it's going to be a time that God will remember everything we have ever done. Be conscious of the fact that this is really your life.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1989

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