



“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be,” Revelation 22:12.

The Wages of the Steward

Central Truth: God is not forgetful of the faithful steward’s labor of love.

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“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22: 12). There is a warning to the wayward and an encouragement to the faithful. Rewards are real. God gives them here and in the hereafter. A review of the Christian's service for God must certainly take into account Bible teaching on rewards.

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).

In current use, a reward is something given in recognition of a good act. In the King James Version of the Bible, however, “*reward*” is used in a general sense to refer to anything given. The term refers to the recompense of evil (Psalm 91:8), wages (I Timothy 5:18), bribes (Micah 7:3), and gifts (Jeremiah 40:5). The comments which follow will refer to reward primarily as it applies to God's gifts to the saints.

I. THE SOURCE OF REWARDS

A. God is the judge who rewards good and evil. He is “*the Judge of all the earth*” (Genesis 18:25). “*He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth*” (Psalm 96:13). “*God shall judge the righteous and the wicked*” (Ecclesiastes 3:17). “*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27).

Live with this truth in mind: “I will answer to God.” For every good

thing and every evil thing, “I will answer to God.” When the whole truth is clear and nothing remains hidden, “I will answer to God.” That is an awesome challenge to holiness in the service of God!

B. Jesus Christ is the person by whom God rewards. He said. *“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son”* (John 5:22). *“It is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead”* (Acts 10:42). *“God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ”* (Romans 2:16).

Revelation 22:13, 16, 20 sets forth qualifications of Jesus to be judge of the living and dead. He is the eternal one: *“Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last”* (verse 13). He is the Messiah King: *“the root and offspring of David”* (verse 16). He is the coming Lord: *“Behold, I come quickly”* (verse 12). He is the authoritative Word: *“Blessed are they that do his commandments”* (verse 14). That is He with whom we have to do in judgment. Prepare to meet Him on that dread day when accounting will be made.

II. THE BASIS OF REWARDS

Two statements indicate the basis of rewards: *“My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. . . . Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”* (verses 12, 14). Rewards will be based on obedience to Holy Scripture, according to Jesus.

A. Rewards will be according to works (Matthew 16:27) both to the saved (II Corinthians 5:20) and to the unsaved (Revelation 20:12). *“I the LORD search the heart . . . to give every man according to his ways”* (Jeremiah 17:10).

B. Rewards will be according to privilege. It will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for sinners with lesser revelation than for those with greater revelation (Matthew 11:20-24). Some will have a more severe discipline than others (Luke 12:47, 48). Be warned.

C. Rewards will be according to truth. *“The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether”* (Psalm 19:9). *“We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth”* (Romans 2:2).

D. Rewards will be according to the Bible. Jesus said, *“The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48). These are *“the books”* which will be opened at the great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:12). Stay close to the Bible, for you will be judged by it.

III. THE NATURE OF REWARDS

A. Salvation is not a reward. It is a free gift of God's grace. Rewards are based on merit; salvation is based on grace. *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”* (Titus 3:5). God could say it no clearer than that. *“By grace are ye saved through faith . . . : it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

B. Some rewards are temporal. God doubled the number of animals Job owned when the patriarch remained faithful through testing (Job 1:1-3, 10; 42:10-13). He promised an abundant harvest when Israel brought the whole tithe to His house (Malachi 3:11). He promised that the liberal soul would be *“fat”* and *“watered”* in abundance (Proverbs 11:25). Yes, it pays in this world to serve Jesus.

C. Some rewards are spiritual. Jesus promised, *“Great is your reward in heaven”* (Matthew 5:12) in reference to spiritual rewards. But He is more specific as to the exact rewards we will receive. To *“shine as the brightness of the firmament”* and *“as the stars for ever and ever”* is a blessed reward of the teacher and soul-winner (Daniel 12:3). To be *“ruler over many things”* is the reward for a faithful servant (Matthew 25:23). *“Glory, honour, and peace”* is the reward of *“every man that worketh good”* (Romans 2:10).

Then there are the crowns: an incorruptible crown for the overcomer (I Corinthians 9:25), a crown of righteousness for those who love the Lord's return (II Timothy 4:8), a crown of life for one who overcomes temptation (James 1:12), and a crown of glory for the faithful pastor (I Peter 5:4).

IV. THE TEST FOR REWARDS

God's Word is the standard by which all persons and things will be judged (John 12:48). His Word is infallible, so free from error that no one dares to add to or take from it (Revelation 22:18, 19). *“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar”* (Proverbs 30:6).

Human opinion changes, but the Word of God does not change. Right is right because it agrees with God; wrong is wrong because it disagrees with God. Since God does not change, the standards of right and wrong do not change. Those standards are recorded in Holy Scripture. Stay close to the Bible. It is the standard by which you will one day be judged.

V. THE TIME OF REWARDS

A. Some rewards come at the present time. Jesus said, *“There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting”* (Luke 18:29, 30). Notice the statement *“in this present time”* as it refers to rewards. Yes, there are rewards now for serving Jesus.

B. Some rewards await the return of Jesus. *“I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12). *“The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works”* (Matthew 16:27). If you are not yet amply repaid for sacrifices in service for Jesus, just remember that God does not settle all His accounts on the last day of each month. Something great is awaiting you when He comes. Believe it with joy and wait with anticipation. *“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love”* (Hebrews 6:10).

Thus we conclude a series of fourteen studies [L144-157] on the biblical doctrine of stewardship. What an inclusive and rewarding study it has been! We have seen that we are stewards of life, commitment, position, the gospel, personality, the tongue, labor, counsel, influence, spiritual gifts, time, substance, teaching, and rewards. What changes will you make in your life as a result of these studies? How will they make you a better Christian and servant of our Lord? Your response is the reason for this series of studies.

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (I Corinthians 4:1, 2).

Questions

1. What is the Bible meaning of reward?
2. How is Hebrews 6:10 related to this study?
3. How can both God and Jesus be the judge who determines our rewards?
4. Why will God reward us according to our works?
5. How will rewards be according to our privilege?
6. What place does the Bible have in a judgment for rewards?
7. What kind of rewards does God give in this world?

8. What rewards await us when Jesus returns?
9. How can you apply II John 8 to your personal life?
10. What will you do with this series of studies in the light of 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2?