

## ***Session 3 Understanding Eternal Rewards: Biblical Principles (Pt. 2)***

### **I. REVIEW**

- A. Why believers should desire eternal rewards?
1. ***Love***: Rewards are about Jesus expressing how He feels about how we loved Him on earth.
  2. ***Partnership***: Rewards are about working in close proximity to Jesus as He rules the earth.
  3. ***Righteousness***: Rewards are about the Lord celebrating our choices for righteousness.
  4. ***Truth***: Rewards are about the truth concerning our loving obedience being openly manifested.
  5. ***Not a secular paradigm***: Rewards are not about gaining status or superiority over others.
- B. Principles mentioned in our last session:
1. Principle #1: Eternal rewards are expressions of grace.
  2. Principle #2: Eternal rewards are given according to works.
  3. Principle #3: All of our works are written in God's books.
  4. Principle #4: There are many types of eternal rewards.
  5. Principle #5: Eternal rewards are glorious.
  6. Principle #6: We compare Scripture with Scripture to gain insight.
  7. Principle #7: We can gain insight from the natural realm.
- C. We must be careful not to reduce Jesus' rewards to something that we can easily imagine.
- D. "Blood-washed believers will be spotless in God's sight, but not all have the same service record. Salvation gets us to heaven, but works determine what we do after we get there." (C. S. Lovett)
- E. We must believe that God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Jesus called us to seek to gain treasure and to be rich in heaven (Mt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18, 20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 19:21; Mk. 9:41; 10:21; Lk. 6:23, 35; 12:21, 33; 16:11; 18:22; Rev. 2:9; 3:18; 22:12).  
<sup>6</sup>***He who comes to God must believe...He is a rewarder of those who...seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)***  
<sup>20</sup>***Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. (Mt. 6:20)***
- F. Paul exhorted us to seek those things which are above—this includes eternal rewards (Col. 3:1-2).

## II. PRINCIPLE #8: REWARDS BEFITTING GOD’S ROYAL FAMILY

- A. Rewards are glorious, as befits God’s royal family.

<sup>9</sup>*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you...into His marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9)*

- B. The glory of the royal daughter in Psalm 45 symbolically points to the glory of the Bride of Christ.

<sup>13</sup>*The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold. (Ps. 45:13)*

- C. The redeemed are as a crown of glory and a royal diadem in God’s hand (Isa. 62:3).

<sup>3</sup>*You shall also be a crown of glory...and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. (Isa. 62:3)*

<sup>17</sup>*...the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him* <sup>18</sup>*...that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* <sup>19</sup>*and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Eph. 1:17-19)*

- D. Solomon’s wisdom was manifested in the way he established the royal household (1 Kgs. 10). Jesus, the greater Solomon, will manifest His wisdom, glory, and power in His royal household. Angels are the servants of the Bride—they serve in the royal court, bringing splendor (Heb. 1:14)

<sup>4</sup>*And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built,* <sup>5</sup>*the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.* <sup>6</sup>*Then she said...* <sup>7</sup>*“Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard* <sup>9</sup>*...because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness”...* <sup>13</sup>*Now King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity. (1 Kgs. 10:4-13)*

## III. PRINCIPLE #9: REWARDS ARE ETERNAL AND NEVER DIMINISH

- A. Heavenly rewards are eternal and imperishable—they will never diminish (Dan. 12:3; Mt. 6:20; Lk. 12:33; 1 Cor. 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Pet. 5:4).

<sup>33</sup>*Provide yourselves...treasure in the heavens that does not fail. (Lk. 12:33)*

- B. Our resurrected bodies will shine like stars forever. Their brightness will never diminish.

<sup>2</sup>*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life...* <sup>3</sup>*Those who are wise shall shine...like the stars forever and ever. (Dan. 12:2-3)*

- C. The crowns of the saints are described as imperishable—not fading away (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 5:4).

<sup>25</sup>*...to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. (1 Cor. 9:25)*

- D. Treasure in heaven can never be destroyed or stolen (Mt. 6:20).

<sup>20</sup>*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Mt. 6:20)*

#### **IV. PRINCIPLE #10: ETERNAL REWARDS ARE GIVEN IN VARYING MEASURES**

- A. Believers will differ from one another in the measure of God’s glory that is expressed through them. There will be a vast difference in heavenly rewards, varying according to each one’s obedience.

*<sup>41</sup>There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. <sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)*

1. The realm of “the resurrection” includes our body, garment, thrones, crowns, and more—each area of our life in the resurrection will express a measure of the glory of God.
2. There are many billions of stars, and each is unique. The Pistol Star is 10 million times brighter than our sun and has a mass 100 times greater. In the age to come, there might be several billion people in God’s family. No two believers will have the same measure of glory.

- B. Some in the kingdom will be called least, and some will be called great (Mt. 5:19; 11:11; 18:4; Lk. 9:48; Rev. 19:5). That is, their life choices will be “called great”—by God, the angels, the saints. Jesus described a great diversity in how the saints’ life choices will be viewed in the age to come.

*<sup>19</sup>Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments...shall be called least in the kingdom ...but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom. (Mt. 5:19)*

*<sup>5</sup>...saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants...both small and great!” (Rev. 19:5)*

- C. In God’s family in the New Jerusalem, there will be different positions, responsibilities, capacities, and experiences. We see similar differences in this age. The distinctions in the age to come are related to our faithfulness, humility, obedience, and diligence, not to our gifting in this age.

- D. Everyone has the opportunity to be called great in the age to come. The judgment seat is the great equalizer. There will be no competition, envy, or comparison with others, since all will be preoccupied with God’s love and beauty, having a deep sense of gratitude.

- E. **Resurrected body:** God’s glory will be manifested in our resurrected bodies in varying measures. Our bodies will shine—some to a greater degree, just as one star differs from another in glory.

*<sup>43</sup>The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Mt. 13:43)*

*<sup>2</sup>...His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. (Mt. 17:2)*

- F. **Garments:** I assume that each will have a varying measure of glory in their garments and that there will be many different types of clothing with unique design, fabric, brightness, coloring, fragrance, etc. The saints’ garments may be diverse to suit different occasions.

- G. **Authority:** We will all have different work assignments with varying measures of authority and responsibility (Mt. 19:28, 30; 25:21; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21). There are many different roles in the infrastructure of a nation. For example, in the USA, there are over 22 million people employed in the infrastructure—federal, state, and local.

*<sup>17</sup>“...because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” <sup>18</sup>And the second came...<sup>19</sup>likewise he said to him, “You also be over five cities.” (Lk. 19:17-19)*

- H. **Angels:** There are also differing spheres of authority and capacities among angels—some are strong (Rev. 5:2; 18:1, 21). The Russian Orthodox Church parallels medieval angelology in identifying nine ranks of angels. From the highest-ranking to the lowest—*seraphim* (Isa. 6:2), *cherubim* (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:17-22; Ezek. 10:12-14, 28:14-16; Rev. 4:6-8), *thrones* (Col. 1:16), *dominions* (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16), *powers* (1 Pet. 3:22), *authorities* (Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:22), *principalities* (Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:16), *archangels* (1 Thes. 4:16; Jude 1:9), and angels (1 Pet. 3:22).

<sup>1</sup>*...angel...having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. (Rev. 18:1)*

<sup>16</sup>*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. (Col. 1:16)*

- I. As there are different measures of glory among the redeemed, there will also be different measures of condemnation in hell (Mt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 23:14; Mk. 12:40; Lk. 12:47-48; 20:47; Rom. 2:5-6).

<sup>14</sup>*Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. (Mt. 23:14)*

## V. PRINCIPLE #11: JUDGMENT IS STRICTER FOR LEADERS

- A. There are stricter, or higher, standards of judgment for leaders at the judgment seat (Jas. 3:1).

<sup>1</sup>*...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (Jas. 3:1)*

- B. At the judgment seat, Jesus will require a greater response of faithfulness, humility, and diligence from those who were given more in this age (Lk. 12:48). We measure faithfulness and diligence very differently for someone who is 5 years old compared to someone who is 50 years old.

<sup>48</sup>*“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Lk. 12:48)*

## VI. PRINCIPLE #12: SOME WILL SUFFER LOSS AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

- A. Some will suffer loss of rewards that could be received (1 Cor. 3:15; 1 Jn. 2:28; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 3:11, 18; 16:15). Suffering loss does not mean physical suffering, but forfeiting potential rewards—by neglecting God’s will, refusing to repent of sinful activities, and not persevering in our calling.

<sup>15</sup>*If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved. (1 Cor. 3:15)*

<sup>8</sup>*Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for but that you may be rewarded fully. (2 Jn. 8; NIV)*

- B. Jesus warned believers not to allow anyone to take their crown—perhaps by allowing themselves to be influenced by those who promote a view of Scripture that leads to compromise, resulting in losing their crown or other rewards that they could have gained.

<sup>11</sup>*“Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” (Rev. 3:11)*

<sup>15</sup>*“Blessed is he who...keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” (Rev. 6:15)*

## VII. PRINCIPLE #13: THE FULLNESS OF REWARDS FOR OVERCOMERS (REV. 2-3)

- A. Jesus mentioned 18 eternal rewards in Revelation 2-3 for overcomers. Who are these overcomers? If the rewards are automatically received *in fullness* by all, without regard to being faithful, then the warnings associated with not gaining specific rewards are “empty,” with no real loss for those who do not repent in the ways Jesus indicated. It seems that most of the 18 rewards will be received by all believers *in part*, and that only overcomers will receive them in the *fullest* measure.
- B. Overcomers are spoken of in two different contexts in the New Testament (1 Jn. 4-5; Rev. 2-3).
1. **Context #1: Overcoming worldly unbelief:** All believers are overcomers in this general way. In this context, John wrote of overcoming the world by believing in Jesus and refusing the heresies that John confronted in his epistle, namely, that Jesus was not God and did not come in the flesh (1 Jn. 5:4-5). The issue here is to *overcome heresies* by believing in Jesus.  
*<sup>4</sup>For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 Jn. 5:4-5)*
  2. **Context #2: Overcoming unfaithfulness:** Not all believers overcome in this specific way. John wrote of overcoming areas of unfaithfulness in a believer’s life as specifically defined in different ways in each of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation (Rev. 2-3).
- C. **Summary:** We *overcome unbelief* and the world on the day we are born again (1 Jn. 5:4-5). As believers, we *overcome unfaithfulness* after we persevere in obedience to the end of our life.
- D. The application of rewards to overcomers—three different interpretations:
1. **The eternal reward view:** It rightly teaches that the 18 rewards in Revelation 2-3 are given in fullness to overcomers in eternity, related to their faithfulness in loving and obeying Jesus.
  2. **The all believers view:** It teaches that all believers are overcomers, who inherit the fullness of all 18 rewards by virtue of simply believing in Jesus for salvation. Faith in Jesus rather than faithfulness to Him is emphasized by this view. I do not believe this is the best interpretation.
  3. **The loss of salvation view:** It teaches that failing to overcome in the specific ways highlighted in Revelation 2-3 disqualifies one from the rewards that are supposedly synonymous with salvation. This implies that one must overcome all spiritual immaturity to avoid losing their salvation. For example: to the church in Ephesus, overcoming meant recovering their first love for Jesus (2:4). According to this view, someone would lose their salvation if they died before faithfully renewing their first love. To the church in Pergamos, overcoming meant resisting all immorality (2:14). According to this view, a sincere believer who dies before fully overcoming in their struggle with pornography loses their salvation. To the church in Sardis, overcoming meant being watchful and holding fast to what God gave them in previous years (3:2), and to the Laodiceans it meant overcoming lukewarmness to the end (Rev. 3:15).

**VIII. PRINCIPLE #14: REWARDS HAVE CORRESPONDENCE WITH OUR RELATIONSHIPS**

- A. Our history with people will be cherished (1 Thes. 2:19; cf. Lk. 16:9; 2 Cor. 4:14; Phil. 2:16). The rich man in Hades remembered his family (Lk. 16:23-28)—others will also be able to do this.  
*<sup>19</sup>What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (1 Thes. 2:19)*  
*<sup>14</sup>knowing that He...will also raise us up with Jesus and will present us with you. (2 Cor. 4:14)*  
*<sup>15</sup>that you may become blameless...you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not...labored in vain. (Phil. 2:15-16)*
- B. Jesus speaks of *friends* receiving us, after death, into their eternal homes. He was exhorting His people to spend their money to make friends who would welcome us in heaven after we die. The godly use of money will enhance your relationships in the age to come with those you helped.  
*<sup>9</sup>Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail [physical death], they may receive you into an everlasting home. (Lk. 16:9)*
- C. By financially supporting people, we become fellow workers, or partners, in their labors, including their rewards (3 Jn. 6-8).  
*<sup>6</sup>If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well...  
<sup>8</sup>We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth. (3 Jn. 6-8)*
- D. We can receive a prophet's reward by receiving and supporting a prophet.  
*<sup>41</sup>He who receives a prophet...shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man... shall receive a righteous man's reward. (Mt. 10:41)*

**IX. PRINCIPLE #15: THE WAY WE JUDGE OTHERS IMPACTS HOW WE ARE JUDGED**

- A. The measure of judgment with which we judge others influences the standard of judgment that we will receive (Mt. 7:2). Thus, we can determine some of the way in which we are judged by Jesus.  
*<sup>2</sup>For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. (Mt. 7:2)*
- B. We are only to judge or point out negative things to people with the goal of restoring them. We must judge others with the *right spirit*, in the *right process*, and with the *right information*.  
*<sup>1</sup>...if a man is overtaken in any trespass...restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. (Gal. 6:1)*
- C. We are to judge or evaluate people with the “law of liberty,” rather than being harsh and exacting.  
*<sup>12</sup>So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup>For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:12-13)*
- D. In a parable, Jesus described how a wicked servant increased judgment on himself by his words.  
*<sup>22</sup>And he said to him, “Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant.” (Lk. 19:22)*