

THE GREATEST HOPE OF ALL 02: REWARDS DAY

Last week, we found out that our greatest hope of all is not in this world. That, in fact, every earthly hope will fade one day, but there is a hope that will not fade. We are going to be snatched up, caught up with Jesus. We miss out on the worse seven years that the world will ever see, and we will have a seven-year party in Heaven before coming back with Jesus. From that moment onwards, we will be forever with Jesus and forever with each other. That should get your hopes up. If that message did not get your hopes up, I do not know what is wrong with you!

But that is not all the good news, it gets even better. Read Luke 14.12-14. At the resurrection of the righteous, which is the rapture, we will be repaid and rewarded for every good thing we have done. We will be rewarded for feeding the poor, for helping people, for ministering to people, for serving people.

As soon as we are raptured, our bodies and souls are now transformed into perfection – matching what our spirit is right now. And we go up to Heaven, and the first thing that happens is reward time! Now this should definitely get you excited!

After the rapture, the first event that happens to us, that takes place in the Father's house is what I call Reward Day. It is normally called the Judgment Seat of Christ, but that is not the best phrase for it. It is a judgment of sorts, but it is not a judgment for sin. Your sins are forgiven. It's a judgment for reward!

Read Romans 14.10. Read 2 Cor. 5.10. Notice that the Judgment Seat of Christ is only for Christians, it is only for the people taking part in the rapture. People who were born again and added to the church. It is not a judgment of sin. Samuel Hoyt says about the judgment seat of Christ:

the expression JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST in English has tended to cause people to draw the wrong conclusion about this evaluation... (it is not) a retribution of sins in the believer's life, it is a place where a child of God is rewarded for how they have used their life for the Lord.

You will be rewarded for what you have done. Read Matthew 16.27, Ephesians 6.8 and Revelation 22.12. There will be reward coming your way!

Now before we go any further, we have to understand beyond the shadow of a doubt that this judgment seat is not in any way a judgment for sin. All your sins were forgiven at the cross.

Read Psalm 103.10-12, Micah 7.19, Romans 8.1, John 5.24 and 2 Corinthians 5.21. We are not saved by what we do, good works do not and cannot save us. Being saved is a gift!

Read Ephesians 2.8-9. Good works will not save us, we are not saved by works. It is a gift. But, now read Ephesians 2.10. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works. We got born again so we could do some good works. Some grace people have a real issue with the word works, but there are dead works and good works. It is on us to find out the difference! You will be rewarded for your works when you get raptured.

The Judgment seat of Christ is not a punishment seat. There will be no jail sentence handed out, no punishment, no condemnation. Just rewards after rewards after rewards for what we did as Christians.

Read I Cor. 3:10-15. The Greek word for judgment here is “bema”. It is a reward platform. Remember, Paul lived in the times of the big ancient Greek Olympic games. After the race would run, all the runners would go to the bema and get their rewards. Back then it was not medals, it was crowns – a laurel wreath. It’s not a courtroom, it’s a Olympic medal seat. We will get the medals in Heaven for how we have lived on earth. So – go for gold!

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not a courtroom. There is no courtroom for those in Christ Jesus! There cannot be as you are saved. It is a Reward Seat. We are all running a race, but one day that race will be over. You will be raptured off the planet, transported to Heaven and the very first thing Jesus will do is reward you for running your race.

Now, the rewards will be determined by this fire. It is like Jesus heaps together everything you have ever done since you got saved and covers it in petrol. And then sets fire to it. Everything you did that was cheap and nasty burns up and is gone, and everything you did that is precious, that is eternal, that is glorious, will remain and you will be rewarded for that. Jesus is not setting fire to you – you are saved and forgiven, and you are in. But we will be judged for what we have done.

Some will lose everything. It will be a fire. Read 2 John 8. You want to live your life to get a full reward. So, let us look at the kind of works that will survive the fire, and what kind of works will not.

Firstly, serving others will always bring a reward, and serving the local church will always bring a reward. The works that burn will firstly be the works you did to be seen by others. Read Matthew 6:2. If you prayed or fasted or gave to impress people, you already have your reward. That is building short term!

Now God really wants to reward you. You are going to sit before Jesus Christ as soon as the rapture happens, and you are going to be rewarded for every good deed you have ever done. If that does not motivate you to stop being lazy, to stop being selfish – then nothing ever will! Christ is going to be the best judge of rewards ever – and He will take things into consideration. You know in court; you can ask for things to be taken into consideration when sentencing. Christ will take into consideration the time you had, the talents you had, the training you had. We will be rewarded!

Your salvation will not be burned up, but some of your works will be, and for some people every single work will be. People who got saved in a meeting, but never went to church after that, people who never tithed, people who never gave a minister a cup of water. They will be like someone who wakes up in the middle of the night, their house will be on fire – smoke everywhere, stinks of burning, run out of the house as it falls apart... the house collapses. Praise God you are alive and saved and safe, but you built your house out of flammable material and now you have no house. That will happen to many people.

But I believe not to you. You listened to the message on Sunday, you are in the Living Church right now! You gave in the offering this week. And all of that will get you a reward on Reward Day. There are three substances that get rewards and three that do not so let us look at those:

I. GOLD

Gold is a symbol of God throughout the Bible. The ark of the covenant was made of gold and wood together, as an image of Jesus being God and Man. Whatever you do with the leading of God, whenever you follow the Word or the Spirit, you are building with gold

and will get a reward for it. If God says “give this much money” – there will be great rewards for that. If God says “go and encourage that person” – there will be great rewards for that. Every time you listen to God, exalt Him, yield to Him, listen to the Word and do it, that is all building with God and will increase your Heavenly reward.

We need to let our works be motivated by the Spirit! We will not get rewards for what we just decide to do! I was once invited to meet a pastor who needed some wisdom but he was not planting a church, he was splitting one with deception to gather a group for himself. That is not God, that is not the will of God, that is not building with gold, and that will never lead to a reward. His purpose was wrong and that cannot prosper. There are still people come to church with the wrong purpose, with secret agendas, and that is never building with gold. I meet many people who think that the end justifies the means – we can sell this or that trinket if it makes money for the kingdom. That is not building with gold.

I've seen people disrupt a service to get some attention, to advertise the meeting down the road, to draw people to them. God is not in the business of disrupting a service to let you have your say! Some people do things for money or reward on this earth, that is not building with gold.

If you want a reward in Heaven, you need to go for gold. And that means you need to do what the Lord leads you to do. When you are doing what the Lord designed and created you to do, you can get your hopes up. You want a REWARD IN HEAVEN, you need to go for GOLD – and that means you need to do what the LORD leads you to do.

Some of you right now have a dissatisfaction inside you – deep – it's not lockdown, it's not the national fear of the virus, it's not this or that – IT IS THAT YOU ARE NOT FULFILLING YOUR PURPOSE. You are not doing what you are designed to do! It's time to make a change.

Read Psalm 127:1. If you are not doing what the Lord has led you to do, you are wasting your time on earth and diminishing your reward in Heaven. You can build a house without the Lord. People have done that. They have built their entire career, their entire family, some people have even built churches – without ever once consulting the Lord. I know whole ministries who have started and worked without ever asking the Lord what He wants them to do! That is not building with gold.

We must build with gold. I constantly ask the Lord, “what do you want to do with Tree of Life, what do you want me to do next”. If God is not in it, it is not gold. We need to build with gold, and not have anything torched on Reward Day.

It is amazingly easy to stray and do something that looks good because others are doing it, because it is ethical and kind, but the question we must ask is “is the Lord in it”. We have had to shift different things at Tree of Life because we drifted. With the TV angels who answer the phones to the TV ministry, they are the most caring, lovely people who give up their time to answer the phones, they were helping pastor our TV audience through counsel and advice. But that was not something we have been called to do, it was not building with gold. God never called me or anyone to pastor a TV audience. We pray for people, it is a prayer line. Your pastor pastors you – if you don't have a pastor, if you don't go to church– we give out one piece of pastoral advice – go to church!

Thank God for our TV ministry, it is reaching the whole world, and growing rapidly. Thank God for our conferences. Thank God for our leadership training and our Gates of the City. But if you do not go to church, you are not building with gold. I said it clearly New Year's Eve, and Tony Cooke repeated it almost word for word last week. It is essential to build with gold that you are in a local church.

You need a pastor – even if just for someone to call if a crisis happens. Andrew Wommack won't be visiting you in hospital. Kenneth Copeland won't be doing your family members funeral – his prayer line will pray for you, but sometimes you need someone there! You won't be getting married by Joyce Meyer.

There is a plan for the church, there is a plan for other ministries that are not the church, but if you try and make that ministry your church, that's not gold. If you try and make Bible College your church, that is not gold. This is the secret of life success – build with gold. Spend the time with the Lord and find out what you are called to do and do it.

I do not have church the way I want, I do it the way Jesus wants. Every meeting we have, we get a plan from God, and we do it as best we can the way God wants to do it. It is building with gold. The reason so many people are part-blessed – they are only part-going for gold. We can be far too complacent doing life God's way. In the temple, Solomon made everyone out of gold. We need to be the same.

Everything in the temple looked like gold because it was gold. It's easy to look like gold when you are gold.

Read 2 Chronicles 12.9-10. Rehoboam lost the gold – he lost his way and lost the gold, rather than pay the price to get gold, he replaced it with brass. That is a picture of a lot of Christian activity. We replaced the gold with brass. Brass can look like gold, it takes a lot of work to get it to shine, it takes a lot of polish, and it fades quickly. A lot of us fade quickly and it is hard work. Why not just find out what God wants us to do and be gold?

We are brass not gold when we put a lot of work into looking good, into choreography, into hype, into this and that – stop doing it, yield to the Spirit of God, do what you are called to do, and bring gold into the temple. That is how we will see miracles, have a flow of the Spirit, have everything God has for us. We are going to go for gold!

2. SILVER

Silver in Scripture represents redemption. The ransom price for another is in silver (Exodus 30). Silver was used to build the pillars of the tabernacles. Redemption is the foundation of everything in the kingdom – Jesus redeemed us after He was betrayed with silver. He was betrayed for the cost of redeeming a slave – and HE REDEEMED ALL OF US – silver is an image of CHRIST THE REDEEMER, CHRIST opening the door so we can enter the kingdom of HEAVEN.

We build with GOLD – listen to the SPIRIT and do GOD'S PLANS GOD'S WAY. We do not substitute the BRASS OF OUR FLESH for the SPIRIT OF GOD motivating us. Then we can also build with SILVER – when we extend the kingdom and let others know they are redeemed. Anytime we turn rubbish into something special – we redeem it, we are building with silver. Anytime we share the truth about the gospel with someone, anytime we set captives free – we are building with SILVER.

Do not go “well, I will only move if God moves me”. If you see someone broken, in pain, lost, and you can help them – go and do it. That is building with silver. That is also important. We need to be thinking about redeeming the world. And every time you have encouraged someone, inspired someone, shared your faith with someone, you are getting a reward on reward day! Like the Olympics, your race is over, and YOU ARE GETTING BLESSED – and it really will be a time for you to GET BLESSED. It is time for you – every time you inspired someone, every time you encourage someone – every time you move forward with someone, reach out to someone – THERE IS A REWARD FOR THAT!

Give a cup of water to a prophet – YOU GET THE WHOLE REWARD FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIFE. Lead someone to the LORD – you get the entire reward for their GOLD AND SILVER. God is so keen to give out rewards. It's the greatest thing to BUILD WITH SILVER AND GOLD – an artist who is going to sculpt a masterpiece or build a tabernacle or do something outrageous – THEIR FIRST JOB IS TO SELECT THE MATERIALS CAREFULLY And choose the best.

WE ARE BUILDING THE GREATEST MASTERPIECE OF ALL! We are building the church of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. We should be bringing the best materials.

GOLD – Listen to GOD and do what HE SAYS, do not just do what you want. Do not just do what you feel like. Don't throw your BIBLE in the bin and try and rip up a church, DO WHAT PROTECTS THE CHURCH, EDIFIES THE CHURCH, LOVES THE CHURCH. THAT IS BUILDING WITH GOLD. THAT IS GOING TO LEAD TO REWARD IN HEAVEN – but it is also going to BLESS YOU AND ENCOURAGE YOU – and bless and encourage everyone in the CHURCH RIGHT NOW – your family – your brothers and sisters in CHRIST – let them see the GOLD, let them SEE THE SILVER. REDEEM THEM, LOVE THEM, DO WHAT GOD CALLS YOU TO DO.... Encourage...select the best materials to build!

DON'T REPLACE THE GOLD WITH BRASS! The church has given out brass too long, and we are all exhausted polishing it every day trying to be something we are not. JUST BE GOLD – LISTEN TO JESUS – AND FOLLOW HIM.

3. PRECIOUS STONES

We should also build with precious stones. That is not DIAMONDS, EMERALDS, etc. A lot of people read it like that, but it is actually – PRECIOUS STONE. Marble, maybe granite or quartz. THINGS THAT LAST.

Imagine I want to build an actual building. The greatest building in the world – IMAGINE I built it with wood, hay and stubble. It would be a rubbish building. AND IT WOULD FAIL A VERY IMPORTANT TEST – the test of TIME. It also handles STORMS. We need to build something that can handle a storm or two!

Some people have lost it during 2020 – the virus, the lockdown. OTHER people lose it for this or that – they get sick, a STORM HAPPENS AND THEY FALL APART LIKE A TWO DOLLAR SUITCASE. Why? They didn't build with marble. THAT WAS HEY!

It is easier and cheaper to get wood than marble, but MARBLE LASTS, MARBLE IS STRONG, MARBLE IS IMPRESSIVE. Some people start living for CHRIST and in a year or two, they are gone. Some people came to TREE OF LIFE, they don't even go to church now, don't even pray, don't walk with God, they never built with MARBLE. They never built it to last.

Now what should we not build with?

1. WOOD.

The main use of wood in BIBLE DAYS was fuel for a fire. Slaves lived in wood houses – if you were talking about wood houses you were talking about slave houses. Listen – anything you do because you HAVE TO – out of guilt or fear, not going to produce in your life. It's going up in the petrol. There's no reward for that. There is no eternal work for anything you have been controlled to do!

2. HAY

Hay had one major use in BIBLE DAYS other than feed animals, and that was to paper up cracks in walls. Normally your walls would be made of stone, which could crack under certain circumstances. And you would get some hay and get it muddled and use it to paper up the cracks. Hay is like trying to fix things up.

You see the gospel is not a repaired life. Jesus didn't come to paper up the cracks in your life, HE CAME TO GIVE YOU A BRAND-NEW LIFE! A repaired life is not going to get you anything in heaven. HAY was of course animal food and the roof of the wooden slave houses, still the same thing.

YOU NEED TO LIVE OUT OF THE SPIRIT – THE NEW LIFE. Do not build with HAY. Do not just build a fixer-upper, start new!

3. STRAW

Straw was so inferior even animals would not eat it. It was used by slaves to stuff their pillows and put on their floor, and sleep on. Imagine living in a house made of wood with a hay roof and the floor and bed is made of straw. And a fire happens. Those houses wouldn't last!

So – the question is for all of us – one day we are leaving this planet, and it will be amazing. ABSOLUTELY AMAZING. WE ARE GETTING A BRAND NEW BODY, WE ARE GETTING A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF THINKING, WE ARE GOING TO BE TOGETHER WITH THE LORD – and with EACH OTHER – FOREVER AND EVER. COMFORT AND ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER WITH THESE WORDS!

Even if you have lived the worst Christian life ever, it's still going to be the best day of your life. BUT YOU CAN ALSO RIGHT NOW CHOOSE HOW YOU BUILD – CHOOSE HOW YOU MOVE FORWARD – CHOOSE WHAT YOU WILL DO. I have spent far too long building the wrong things the wrong way. BUT – we need to make a choice. We need to answer a question.

HOW ARE WE BUILDING OUR LIVES?

Are we building QUICKLY – taking SHORT cuts – DOING THINGS ON THE CHEAP? Are we living a cheap life with perishable materials? ARE WE WASTING OUR LIVES ON THINGS THAT JUST DO NOT MATTER?

Or are you taking your life seriously. ARE YOU BUILDING CAREFULLY – taking the time to say "Lord, is this your will for me, is this where I should be, am I in a church that is feeding me, am I making sure this is working, am I making as much money as I can, saving

as much as I can, giving as much as I can” – AM I CHANGING THE WORLD... am I building something that will last? IS THIS A HOUSE OF WOOD OR MADE OF MARBLE.

The foundation is all HIM. Your salvation is absolutely secure. You cannot change that, praise God! BUT what you build on the foundation – that depends on the choices you made –

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR MARRIAGE? Are you investing in it? When did you last read a book on marriage?

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR CHILDREN? Short term lazy parenting – when was the last time you read a good Christian book on parenting... or you just making it up as you go. We offered a 5 week course on parenting and not one person in the church took us up on it.

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR FRIENDSHIPS? Do you have friends right now – that can stand a storm?

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING MINISTRY? I have seen too many ministers taking quick fixes. I am building something that will last my lifetime, and will last so much my grandchildren will all be part of TREE OF LIFE.

I am not teaching about what's cool and what's good and nice. I AM PRAYING AND FASTING AND STUDYING AND SUBMITTING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT – TO TEACH YOU WHAT YOU NEED TO BE TAUGHT. It's more costly that way, it takes my time. It is an investment. I am careful not to do what is unnecessary, but only do what is necessary. I WANT TO BUILD SOMETHING ROBUST IN YOUR LIFE.

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR MONEY? Do you have Storm based savings?

HOW ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR HEALTH? Are you making future you healthier or unhealthier?

It's a whole new year.

START OFF BY REALIZING THAT JESUS IS THE FOUNDATION UNDER YOUR LIFE – THAT'S THE MOST AWESOME TRUTH. You are in the rapture, you are getting into heaven. THE FOUNDATION IS SECURE! 100% SECURE.

But your reward at the BEMA, your victor's crown – THAT IS ON YOU – THAT IS WHAT YOU WILL BE WEARING FOREVER. It depends on what you build now.

In I Corinthians 9:24-25 we read, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

Read Revelation 3.II. Do not let someone else steal your crown.

You build with gold – no matter who says it is excessive, who says it is too much.

I have been told “You prepare your messages too much” – that's why my preaching is better than yours. I am preaching with gold here. People say “You are a control freak” – over what I have been called to give an account with – I absolutely am. I am not letting you change Tree of Life and then I lose my crown! Not a chance.

People say: “You are too intense”, “You travel too much”, “You go to too many conferences to learn” – YOU HAVE TO REALIZE I AM NOT GOING TO START BUILDING WITH WOOD JUST FOR YOU, I am going to keep building with gold.

“God told me to go to Tree of Life, but I didn’t want to upset my friends at this church” – YOU LET A MAN STEAL YOUR CROWN!

“I wanted to give in the offering, but I had to help this person” – you let a man steal your crown!

“I wanted to serve in the church, but my friend got offended so I backed off” – YOU LET A MAN STEAL YOUR CROWN!

“I was going to phone someone up and encourage them” – but I didn’t, they might have not appreciated it. YOU LET A MAN STEAL YOUR CROWN.

“I was going to pray but I spend three hours on the internet reading insane conspiracy theories and posting memes about 5g and covid” – YOU LET A MAN STEAL YOUR CROWN!

EVERY REWARD ON EARTH IS ULTIMATELY NOT WHAT TO PUT YOUR HOPE IN.
YOUR RACE WILL BE RUN ONE DAY, YOU CAN STOP RUNNING ONE DAY. AND YOU WILL WIN A PRIZE.

THE GREATEST HOPE OF ALL 02: REWARDS DAY QUESTIONS

- I. What is the first thing that happens after the rapture?
2. Will Christians be judged for their sins after the rapture? Why or why not?
3. What is judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ?
4. What are the three things we should build with?
5. What are the three things we should not build with?
6. How can we build with gold in our lives?
7. What does Ben mean when he talks about substituting brass for gold?
8. How can we build with silver in our lives?
9. How can we build with precious stone in our lives?
10. What does it mean to build with wood, hay and straw?
- II. What changes do you need to make in your life to get more reward in Heaven?
12. What about this message inspired or challenged or encouraged you the most?