

Session 2 Understanding Eternal Rewards—Biblical Principles (Pt. 1)

I. REVIEW

*We are on session two of an eight-part series called, **A Biblical Overview of Eternal Rewards**. As I mentioned in our first session, this is one of the themes that Jesus emphasized most. He talked more about this subject than anybody else because He understood the value of this subject, yet it is a very neglected subject in the Body of Christ. Having been a student of this, I find it so encouraging and so exciting. So what I want to do in this second session is give you a framework of some biblical principles so you can look at the different eternal rewards and get a bigger picture from the Scriptures as to what the implications are.*

In this session we are looking at seven principles. Next week we will look at eight more principles, so there are fifteen total that I am highlighting. Again, the idea is to see these principles and create a framework where we can take what Jesus said about the eternal rewards and gain greater understanding as to what their implications are.

- A. Each one will stand before Jesus to give an account of themselves and to receive rewards. The judgment seat, or *bema*, was a familiar term that referred to the platform where a judge sat to evaluate athletic contests to give awards like in the Olympic Games today.

¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

*Okay, we are going to look at just a little bit of review. First, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul said that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That word for judgment seat is, as you know, the *bema* seat. The *bema* seat was the place where judges stood, like at the Olympic games, to give awards. The *bema* seat has mostly an emphasis on awards, though not totally, but mostly.*

- B. What we do with our time, money, deeds, and words really matters. Being faithful to God involves much more than only spending more time in prayer with fasting. The endless tasks that a mother does in serving her family many hours a day matter to the Lord. Knowing that our menial tasks matter gives value to our life. Life doesn't make sense if what we do doesn't have lasting value.

Here is the big takeaway of this whole series: what we do with our time, our money, our deeds, our words really, really matters. Now that is pretty self-evident, but we lose sight of this continually. The thing that we really lose sight of is how the little things really matter. I say that in a most encouraging way. I do not mean the little things, as in "little sins." I am talking about the little acts of humility and the little acts of service that really, really matter to the Lord.

Now, when I talk about being faithful to the Lord and really diligent, some people automatically think, "More prayer and more fasting." Though I believe that growing in prayer and having a spirit of grace related to fasting are important, being faithful to God is far more than going to more prayer meetings. I am talking about something far more extensive than that, for example, the endless tasks that a mother does in the name of love and because of the grace of God. I am talking about a godly woman. She is wanting to serve her family. Those are really significant parts and expressions of being faithful to the Lord. Knowing that the small menial tasks of life—most of our tasks are small and menial—knowing that they are valuable really matters in our life. A matter of fact, if what we do does not have lasting impact to God, then life does not make sense.

The doctrine and the reality of the judgment seat of Christ is Jesus saying, “I am watching everything you are doing. Everything that you do, it can make sense and be important, no matter how small.”

- C. The centerpiece of God’s eternal purpose is for Jesus to return to fully establish His kingdom rule over all the earth and to join the heavenly and earthly realms together (Eph. 1:9-10). **Heaven** speaks of the supernatural realm where God’s power and presence are openly manifested. **Earth** speaks of the physical realm as the place where human process and physical sensations reach their fullest expression. If we do not think rightly about heaven, we will rarely think about heaven.
- ⁹**Made known to us the mystery [hidden plan] of His will... ¹⁰that He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10)**

One of the key frameworks of understanding eternal rewards is this verse that we have looked at many times over the years and the idea that the centerpiece of God’s eternal purpose is for Jesus to return to the earth. Now catch this if this is new to you: He is going to join heaven and earth together at the second coming. What I mean by that is Ephesians 1 says that when Jesus returns, He is going to gather together into one both the things that are in heaven and the things in the earth. He is going to take the supernatural realm of the resurrection, the New Jerusalem, He is going to take the natural realm of the earth of physical human processes and the physical reality of life, and He is going to bring them together. When Jesus returns, He is bringing heaven down to the earth. He is bringing the New Jerusalem with Him. We are going to have a physical, resurrected body. We are going to eat physical food, but there will be a supernatural dimension to it. There will be the heavenly, supernatural realm but in the physical, natural dimensions of how we understand life. That is a big topic. Our theme of this series is not to go into all the details of that. That would be more of a teaching on the millennial kingdom.

One preacher said, “If we do not think rightly about heaven, we will rarely think about heaven.” If we think about heaven as floating on a cloud far away, we will never really think about it. When we think about heaven, when we think about eternal rewards in a concrete way that has an earthly dynamic to them, a physical dynamic to them as well as a supernatural element, we think, “Wow! This is a little more interesting. I can get my mind around this just a little bit more.”

- D. Jesus gave over 50 references to eternal rewards—making it one of His most emphasized themes (Mt. 5:5, 12, 19; 6:4, 6, 18, 20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28, 30; 20:26-27; 23:12; 25:21, 23; Mk. 9:41; 10:21, 43-44; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:8; 21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17, 19; 22:30; Jn. 12:26; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-27; 3:4-5, 11-12, 18, 21; 16:15; 19:7-8; 20:4, 6; 22:5, 12).

Jesus made over fifty references to eternal rewards, making this one of His most emphasized themes. It is not the number one, but it is one of His most emphasized themes. Again, it is a topic that is almost totally neglected in the Body of Christ. It is a topic that is really worth studying, more than a casual “one session, now we got it.” This is really worth learning. As we go through this in the weeks to come, I want to urge you to take the notes and check them out. See if what I am saying really is in the Bible. I mean, do not accept anything unless you see it with your own eyes in your own Bible. When you see it, pray, “Lord, show me. Unpack this thing. Enlarge my understanding on this very, very significant topic.”

- E. Jesus taught on eternal rewards—calling His people to become **great** (Mt. 5:19; 18:4; 20:26; 23:11; Mk. 10:43; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48); to receive **rewards** (Mt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; Rev. 22:12); to gain **riches** (Lk. 12:21; 16:11; Rev. 2:9; 3:18) and **treasure** in heaven (Mt. 6:20; 19:21; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 12:33; 18:22); to be **ruler** over much (Mt. 25:21; 23); to have **authority** over cities (Lk. 19:17, 19), **power** over nations (Rev. 2:26-27) and in society (Mt. 5:5); to sit on **thrones** (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 3:21; 20:4, 6; 22:5); to gain **crowns** (Rev. 2:10; 3:11) and heavenly **garments** (Rev. 3:4-5, 18; 16:15; 19:7-8); to be **exalted** (Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14) and receive **honor** from God (Jn. 12:26); and to be **first** in receiving blessing (Mt. 19:30; 20:26-27).

This is just to give you broad strokes of what Jesus taught on eternal rewards. This is just a really broad picture. We are going to look at a lot more detail in the following sessions. He called His people to become great, to receive rewards, to gain riches, to gain treasure in heaven, to rule over much, to have authority over cities, power over nations, sit on thrones, gain crowns, heavenly garments, etc. This is real! This is Jesus teaching. I mean, He knows everything about this subject. He is authoritative. What He says is reliable. When I look at these, I think, “Wow, this is exciting! I want to put my name on these verses.” Meaning, I want to make these personal.

As I said in our first session, it is not enough to think about ten or twenty years of your future. Think about what you are going to be doing in 300 years, because you are going to have a physical, resurrected body. You really will, if the Lord returns between now and then, which I assume He will in that timeframe. You will literally be living in the New Jerusalem, reigning on the earth with a physical body, with a real job description. That job description is dynamically impacted by things we do in this life, not entirely, but it is impacted by what we do.

- F. We are not left guessing as to what God considers *first and greatest*. Loving God with all of our heart is the *first* emphasis of the Spirit in our lives, and it is the *greatest* calling on anyone’s life. The primary success or greatness of anyone’s life is found in walking in the grace to love God.

³⁷***You shall love the LORD with all your heart...***³⁸***This is the first and great commandment.***
(Mt. 22:37-38)

This subject of eternal rewards is really a subject about love. We are not left guessing as to what God considers the greatest and the first. He said to love the Lord your God. When I think of the subject of eternal rewards, I frame it out within the context of the first commandment, loving God with all of my heart and all of my strength. I interpret the rewards through that grid. Then, of course, if you love God with all of your heart, you cannot help but overflow in loving people with your heart and your strength as well.

II. WHY BELIEVERS SHOULD DESIRE ETERNAL REWARDS

I am going to give you four reasons why believers should desire eternal rewards. Then we are going to look at seven principles of how to understand eternal rewards. Then eight more principles next week, Lord willing.

- A. **Love:** Rewards are about Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we loved Him in this life. He delights in making known how He feels about the way you lived. We will have great joy in hearing His affirmation of our love. He wants us to know that our choices did not go unnoticed.

⁵***The Lord comes...then each one’s praise [affirmation] will come from God. (1 Cor. 4:5)***

The first reason that we should desire eternal rewards—this is my favorite one; it is about love—rewards are about Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we loved Him in this life. I want to say that again. Now I

will say this, repeat it, over and over. I have said this phrase hundreds of times over the years. I love this. Rewards, I imagine receiving rewards from the Lord. What He is saying is not, “You are awesome. You are amazing. You are superior to other people.” No, He is saying, “I want you to know how I feel about the way you loved Me when you were in this earthly life,” because Jesus delights in making known how He feels about the way you lived. You know He has feelings. He is watching the way you live. He is not disconnected. He is not unconcerned. He has passion. He enjoys you, and He wants you to know how He enjoys you, so He rewards us first about that.

One of my favorite passages in the New Testament—you know you get to have a hundred of them—is here in 1 Corinthians 4:5. I love this, talking about when the Lord returns, when He comes—the second coming—“then each person’s praise will come to him from God.” Now, “praise” here does not mean worship; it means affirmation. Then the Lord is going to make known to you how He felt about the way you lived. I love this! We will have so much joy in His joy in this exchange with us. He wants us to know that our choices—and again most of our choices are small and they go unnoticed—but He wants us to know our choices did not go unnoticed by Him, that He remembers them.

- B. **Partnership:** Rewards are about working in close proximity to Jesus as He reigns over the earth. He desires that His Bride be with Him to reign with Him in deep partnership (Jn. 17:24; Rev. 3:21).

²⁴**Father, I desire that they...may be with Me where I am... (Jn. 17:24)**

²¹**To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... (Rev. 3:21)**

The second reason we care about eternal rewards is partnership. I mean partnership with Him. Rewards are also about working in close proximity to Jesus in the mandate that the Father gave Him to rule the nations. At the second coming Jesus is returning, and the New Jerusalem is descending to the earth. That is where His throne is. That is where we will live. Travel will be instant and effortless to any place on the earth where the saints will reign. They will have physical, resurrected bodies. They will be physical. You will have flesh and bones like Jesus had in Luke 24. It will be supernatural flesh, not corruptible flesh. You will look like you look now, but in perfection. I know some of you are almost there. Total perfection, and you will be interfacing with people who still live with natural bodies on the earth.

*In John 17:24, right before He went to the cross, Jesus let us see His heart. He prayed, “Father—this is in essence one of the reasons why I am going to the cross—Father, I desire that they be with Me. This is about them being with Me.” I mean, He also went to the cross for the Father’s glory and purposes related to the Father. He said, “Father, I want them with Me. I want them with Me where I am. I want to rule the nations **with** them **in** partnership.”*

You can read a number of the passages about ruling and reigning with Christ. There are quite a few of them actually. Look at this here in Revelation 3:21. This is Jesus speaking, He said, “I will grant them to sit with Me on My throne.” It is going to be partnership; we are going to be doing it together.

1. Believers will work in a varying proximity to Jesus in the Millennium depending in part on the measure of responsibilities with which they are entrusted. The greater the sphere of authority one has, the more interaction will be necessary. We see this principle employed in the way He interacted with people in different ways during His earthly ministry. For example, He related differently to the 3, the 12, the 70, the 120, and the multitudes.

This may be a new idea to some believers that—and I am assuming; I do not know; nobody knows the number—there will be several billion believers from history plus the great harvest at the end of the age where I am expecting a billion at that. Again, nobody knows the numbers, but these several billion believers with resurrected bodies will all work in varying proximity to Jesus. They will not all be sitting in the garden having a picnic with Jesus all day, every day, all two or three billion, whatever the number is. They will be working with Him in part, related to the measure of responsibility they are entrusted to rule.

Now in terms of ruling the nations, as we mentioned in the first session, right here in our own nation there are twenty-two million people who are employed by the government: federal, state, and local. There are twenty-two million positions in the infrastructure of the government in America, twenty-two million. I know some folks say, “Ouch! Let’s change that.” That is not the point right now, the point being that not everybody is going to be the king over a nation, but they will be ruling and reigning in different spheres. The greater the sphere of authority one has, the more interaction will be necessary with Him. Their interaction will be real. It will not be symbolic. It will really be talking to Him about your sphere that is entrusted to you.

Now we see this same principle employed in the way Jesus interacted with people when He was in His earthly ministry. When He was here in the days of His flesh, He was in one place at one time, talking to one or two or three or a handful of people in a conversation. We find the pattern of His life is that He related to the three in a particular way. He related to the Twelve in a particular way, the seventy, the 120, the 500, and then the multitudes. Meaning, there were various relationships He had, related to some of their roles in what He was entrusting to them.

2. Jesus’ physical body in the age to come will be *in only one place at a time*. By the Spirit we will all have communication with Him, feel His presence, and know His heart. The **Hypostatic union** speaks of Jesus having two natures, being fully human and fully divine. He is omnipresent in His deity—His divine nature makes Him always present with us. But by definition, as a Man, Jesus can only be in one place at a time in His physical body.

Jesus’ physical body in the age to come, His physical body I am talking about, will only be in one place at one time. Now, be of good courage! We will all be able to communicate with Him and feel His presence by the Spirit. You know the reality of Jesus having two natures: He is omnipresent because He is God, but, by virtue of being a Man, in His physical body He will be in one place at one time. Again, there will be several billion believers, I guess. So they all have access to Him by the Holy Spirit, when not in His presence, and they will know His heart. I am talking about He literally says, “Dining together with Me.” That is an exciting concept, I mean, having an actual meal, not just a figurative meal.

- C. **Righteousness:** Rewards are about the Lord celebrating our choices for righteousness. He loves righteousness (Heb. 1:9), and His name is Righteousness (Jer. 23:6); thus, He celebrates even our smallest acts of righteousness. He manifests His zeal over them because His nature is righteous.

⁹***You have loved righteousness...therefore God...has anointed You with...gladness... (Heb. 1:9)***

A third reason why I encourage people to be interested in eternal rewards: it is about righteousness. Meaning, rewards are about the Lord celebrating our choices for righteousness, because the Scripture says that He loves righteousness. He loves it. The Scripture says that His name is righteousness. If He loves righteousness, and His name is righteousness, it is natural that He would celebrate righteousness, every single act of righteousness. That is how zealous He is for it.

Some people say they do not care about eternal rewards. I say, “Think again. Jesus talked a lot about this subject. It is not a biblical mindset to not care about this.” The fact that Jesus cares so much about righteousness, He is going to celebrate every small deed of righteousness you did. That is remarkable. It is His nature to do that. Eternal rewards are linked to this.

- D. **Truth:** Rewards are about the truth concerning our love and obedience being openly manifested. Because God is love (1 Jn. 4:16), and Jesus is “the truth” (Jn. 14:6), whatever is true about how we loved Him will come to light in His presence. The Man who is “the Truth” vindicates the truth about how His people love Him. It is in His nature to bring our choices for love to light.

There is the issue of truth. Eternal rewards are about the truth of our love being openly manifested. Jesus is the truth. We all know the passage. He said, “I am the way, I am the truth, and the life.” Thus, what is true about the way we loved Him will come to light when we are in His presence, because what is true about us cannot stay in darkness when we are in the presence of the One who is the truth. It is His nature to bring to light our choices to love Him. It is truthful, even our weak love, our small love, as it is still real love. Because He is the truth, when we are with Him what is true about us will be openly known and seen. That is a wonderful thing.

Again, a lot of folks, when they think of the judgment seat of Christ, only think of the negative, “Oh no!” Beloved, that is what the blood of Jesus is for—to cleanse us and fully forgive us of the negative. The negative that we experience then is the loss of potential awards. It not in an actual penalty or an embarrassment in that moment. It is by not having a testimony of having been fully committed to Him the way we would want; that is the loss we would have. It will not be in a sense of penalty at all.

- E. **Joy:** The saints will have great joy in working closely with Jesus in reigning with Him (Mt. 25:21). There will be joy in seeing Him affirm our love for Him. There will be no competition or envy.

²¹I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord. (Mt. 25:21)

I have taught this subject over the years. I always run into a few who say they do not care about it. I say, “You know, I think you will. I really, really think you will care about Jesus expressing how He feels about the way you loved Him and the proximity of being and working with Him as He reigns in the earth.”

Look what He said in Matthew 25:21. He was talking about after His return. He said, “I will make you ruler of many things,” and, in that role of ruling, Jesus highlights that they will enter into joy.

They will love this. They will not say, “Oh, you know, just a little cabin at the edge of glory. You know, do not bother with me, Lord. I am good. I am good.” There will not be any of that false humility stuff going on there. There will be great joy in seeing His enthusiasm, His affirmation expressed in ruling and in any kind of proximity to this mandate that the Father has given Him to rule the nations.

Jesus says, “It will be an occasion of great joy.” Beloved, there will be no envy. There will be no competition. There will be no comparison. People will be so preoccupied with His beauty. They will be so gripped, preoccupied with gratitude for the glory of God around them. They will all be stirred to walk in servanthood and love. There will not be the negative element because there is no envy and jealousy and comparison. That is not the issue. That is not the motive. This does not mean we will not have joy or that we will not care about these things that the Scripture describes as eternal rewards.

- F. **Not a secular paradigm:** Rewards are not about gaining superiority or status before others. Jesus called us to reject a secular paradigm that seeks honor and authority to lord over people with a spirit of pride (Mt. 20:25). Some claim not to care about eternal rewards—this is a non-biblical mindset. Jesus validated the desire to be great (Mt. 20:26). Rewards are a very important part of our future.

²⁵**But Jesus...said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them...”**²⁶**Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great...let him be your servant.” (Mt. 20:25-26)**

I understand that the secular paradigm or the secular perspective leads a lot of folks to say, “I do not care about eternal rewards.” They have a secular perspective. They think of eternal rewards as gaining superiority over people or lording it over people or being their boss. They say, “I do not want to do that.”

I say, “That is good, because Jesus is really against that. He taught us, ‘No, that is how the Gentiles, that is how the unbelievers do it. We are very different.’”

Verse 26, He said that whoever desires to be great should walk in a servant spirit. Notice He affirmed the desire to be great. He did not say, “He who desires to be great, how dare you?!” He said, “That is good, but you have to know that it will only work in the kingdom way with a servant spirit, using that place of favor to enhance and enrich others.”

Let’s look at these seven principles. We will look at each of them, quite briefly of course. Then we will look at eight more principles in our next session.

III. PRINCIPLE #1: ETERNAL REWARDS ARE EXPRESSIONS OF GRACE

- A. We do not “earn” rewards. The rewards we receive are a far greater than anything that we could ever deserve. Jesus “pays” so well though we do so little (Mt. 10:42; 25:21; Lk. 19:17). Jesus can afford to be extravagant with heavenly rewards because He is so rich and He greatly enjoys His people and wants to express it. He is the wealthiest, kindest, and most generous Man ever to live.

²¹**...Well done...you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.**
(Mt. 25:21)

¹⁷**...Well done...because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.**
(Lk. 19:17)

Principle number one, eternal rewards are expressions of the grace of God, meaning we do not earn rewards at all. It is impossible to earn rewards. What do I mean? The rewards He gives us are far greater than anything we could ever deserve. I mean, we give someone a cup of cold water, He gives us treasure in heaven. The comparison is so great! The gulf between what we do and what He gives us is so great. I like to say we take a step of obedience, He gives us a mile of blessing. Not in our wildest imagination will anybody construe it to be they earned those rewards. Jesus pays so well when we do so little.

Notice in Matthew 25:21, He said, “You were faithful over few things; here are many. I am going to bless you with many now.” Luke 19:17, “You were faithful over very little, but here are ten cities to rule.” We do a little, but He pays so well. He gives so much. Now, why is this? Well, He can afford to be so extravagant because He is so rich. He is so rich. He would say, “That is not a problem.” It is not a problem for Him to give you a billion dollars a billion times. Not that it is going to be in dollars; it is going to be in Deutschmarks. No, it is not! That is a joke. The reason He is so extravagant is because He is so rich. Also, because He enjoys His people. He wants to express His generosity. He wants to. He loves it. It is who He is.

- B. We will never “out-give” Jesus. We take one step of obedience and receive a mile of blessing.
³⁸***Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down...and running over... (Lk. 6:38)***
²⁹***Everyone who has left...lands for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold... (Mt. 19:29)***

I wrote, back in the first principle, that He is the wealthiest, kindest, most generous Man who ever lived on the earth. He is so kind, He is so wealthy, and He is so generous. So when we think about eternal rewards, you will never out-give Him, never, ever close. The idea of earning them is inconceivable.

Jesus said, in effect, “You give, I will give it back to you good measure, pressed down, running over. It will be way more than you gave Me.” It will be so obvious to everyone. It will never enter anyone’s mind in that day they earned the reward that they are receiving. So we can dismiss that objection that some have about not wanting to be a part of earning something. He said in Matthew 19:29, “Those that have left family”—he gives quite a list there—“children, wife, friends, houses, lands for My name’s sake, I will give them a hundredfold.” That is not an accounting term like, “100, oops, not 101-fold, just 100.” No, it means that, at abundance beyond anything we gave Him, He will give back to us.

- C. Jesus is the ultimate “cheerful giver” who rewards His people generously (2 Cor. 9:6-7). He relates to us according to the “riches of His glory” (Rom. 9:23; Eph. 1:18; 3:16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27).
⁶***...he who sows...will also reap bountifully...⁷for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9:6-7)***
²³***...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy... (Rom. 9:23)***
¹⁸***...that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Eph. 1:18)***

Scripture says that God loves a cheerful giver. Jesus is the ultimate cheerful giver. It says that if you will sow—if you will plant service or money or love—you are going to reap bountifully, generously. If you plant—you sow some money, you sow some service, you sow some love, some humility—beloved, you are going to reap bountifully in a way beyond our imagination. God loves a cheerful giver.

I can imagine when Paul wrote that, the Father looked at the Son—this is just my imagination—and They said, “They have no idea how cheerful We are and how generous We are in giving!”

*Well, look at the language that Paul uses to describe how God relates to us. He uses the phrase or phrases like this—there are actually many more than I have written here—“the **riches** of His glory.” He does not relate to us in a beggarly way. He does not relate to us barely getting by. The riches of the supernatural glory of God, that is the description. Now this not only involves the way He forgives us, this includes eternal rewards. You do not want to think just forgiveness only. It is His leadership. It is His relationship with us. It is the way that He rewards, the way that He expresses how He feels about the way you loved Him. The riches of the glory. So whatever these rewards are, they are described briefly in the Bible. They are far more glorious than we are imagining them. However you imagine them, multiply it 1,000-fold, and you are not even there. They are that glorious.*

- D. Jesus judges His people graciously according to the “law of liberty” (Jas. 2:12).
¹²***So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. (Jas. 2:12)***

James the apostle says, “So speak and so act [or do] knowing you are going to be judged”—listen to this—“by the law of liberty.” James was Jesus’ half-brother, the apostle James. He could have said, “I know my Brother who is my Savior and my God. He judges, He evaluates us, by the law of liberty. I know what He is like.” He said, “Live in a way”—this is encouraging, actually—“knowing that you are going to be judged by a generous and gracious God, a judge who judges you according to the law of liberty.” He goes on to say, “Therefore, judge other people by the law of liberty.” That is what he says in the next verse. We will look at that a little bit next week.

IV. PRINCIPLE #2: ETERNAL REWARDS ARE GIVEN ACCORDING TO WORKS

- A. Jesus specifically used the word, “reward” (Mt. 5:12, 46; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; Mk. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; Rev. 22:12; cf. Isa. 40:10; 62:11) and the phrase, “according to his works” (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12) and even that some would be “repaid” in the resurrection (Lk. 14:14).

²⁷*The Son of Man will come...then He will reward each according to his works. (Mt. 16:27)*

¹²*I am coming...My reward is with Me to give to every one according to his work. (Rev. 22:12)*

¹³*But when you give a feast, invite the poor...the lame, the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection... (Lk. 14:13-14)*

¹²*Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Mt. 5:12)*

³⁵*Love your enemies, do good...and your reward will be great... (Lk. 6:35)*

Principle number two, eternal rewards are not only according to grace, but also according to works. It is what we do. Jesus specifically used three phrases. Now, some of us do not like these three phrases because we have this kind of uneasy feeling that Jesus is maybe slightly unintentionally betraying the grace of God by using these three phrases, these three terms.

He says, “I am going to reward you.”

We say, “Reward? That sounds like earning. Jesus, use a different word.”

Jesus says, “Reward. Reward.” He is unashamed. He is bold. He would say, “It is a reward, but it is a reward through My grid: the gracious God.”

“Jesus, could You use a different word? We might get the wrong idea; we might think it is a reward.”

Then the next thing Jesus says several times is that it is according to your works.

“Jesus, no! Remember the reformation.” Oh, it has not happened yet, you know, way back then when Jesus is teaching this, but, “Remember the reformation! You cannot say “works.” That is bad.”

Jesus said, “According to what you do. According to works.” Then He really pushed the envelope. He said, “You are going to be repaid in the resurrection.” He used that in Luke 14:14. He said, “When you have a feast, invite the poor and the lame and the blind. You do that, you will be repaid.”

Like, “Uh oh, repaid? Jesus, You stepped over the line this time. I know it is unintentional. You did not mean to, but You are confusing the grace of God.”

He would say, “No, I am not. I understand the grace of God.”

*I find that Christians are nervous about these terms. We feel tension in them because we want to be strong in the grace of God. Beloved, **these works are empowered by the grace of God.** There is not one believer who is being motivated to do good works by the devil. Good works are motivated by the free grace of God and the Holy Spirit inspiring us, giving us ideas, and motivating us. They are not contrary to grace; they are evidences of grace. We are not earning His favor. We are expressing the work of grace in our life by walking it out. I want you to get this correlation really clearly: reward according to works. Do not be afraid of it. Do not hesitate. Do not draw back.*

Yes, I understand. As I have studied this in my early days, I had this tension like, “Oh, Lord, no! No, You are pushing the envelope too much.”

He would say, “No, not if you understand I am talking about. Good works that flow out of the grace of God.” Then in Luke 6 He talks about, “Your reward will be great.” I mean, He really pushes it. He said that it is not just a reward, it is going to be a great reward.

- B. We are rewarded for our acts of righteousness done in this age (Rev. 19:8). Our works include our actions, words, and how we spend our time and money and care for our families and others.

⁸***To her [Bride] it was granted to be arrayed...for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:8)***

⁸***Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor [work]...¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. (1 Cor. 3:8, 14)***

We are rewarded, it says over and over and over, according to our actions, our acts. Revelation 19:8, on the wedding day, the Bride of Christ—again a couple billion believers I assume—they will be wearing their love. Everybody will have the free gift of righteousness, the robe of righteousness. There will be an array of heavenly garments. We will look at this in the sessions to come. There will be an array of heavenly garments beyond the robe of righteousness. On the wedding day, part of the heavenly garments of every believer will depict the way they lived for the Lord during their life. In other words, they are wearing their love on the wedding day. They have the gift of righteousness, the robe. We are wearing His love, and we are wearing our love and His enthusiasm about our love, because that is what rewards are. They are the way He feels about the way we loved Him.

Now remember our righteous acts are actions, but they are words, too. Words are very important. Taking a moment to say kind words to people, even friends, familiar ones, just taking a moment to pause and think of something that would be a blessing, a sentence or two, that matters. To a stranger, to an enemy, for real! To an enemy, speaking a word of blessing with no sarcastic tone at all, in genuineness, these things are righteous acts.

The way we spend our time and money really matters. The way we care about our families. Again, I am thinking about moms. I think of moms as some of the hardest workers, most diligent workers, in the kingdom of God. Probably the most effective disciple-makers in the kingdom of God, over history. They have got the two, the three, the four or five or whatever the number is right there in their home, hours a day, discipling and loving their family. I am not putting down the rest of the human race, but so often the mom is not appreciated, not recognized. I mean, you know, moms were created to give rides, cook meals, wash, clean, and have everything ready!

They might say, “Lord, I want to get out of the house and get in the ministry.”

The Lord would say, “You **are** in the ministry, and you **are** doing the works of the kingdom right now. These are real actions right now. They really matter.”

- C. Faith without “works” is considered to be “dead faith” (Jas. 2:17-18, 20, 22, 26). We are saved as a gift by faith in Jesus’ work, but we are rewarded according to our works. Our entrance into heaven is not based on our works, but our role in heaven is. Some misunderstand the value of their works; since no one can be saved by their works, they falsely conclude that their works do not matter.

¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...¹⁸I will show you my faith by my works...²²Do you see that faith was working together with his [Abraham’s] works, and by works faith was made perfect? ...²⁶so faith without works is dead also. (Jas. 2:17-26)

*Faith that does not display itself in good works, James said, is dead. Yes, we are saved as a free gift by faith, but we are rewarded according to works. Our **entrance** into heaven is not based on works, but our **role** in heaven is.*

*I have written here that many believers misunderstand the value of works. So they get nervous that if they value works they are somehow diminishing the grace of God. No, you are not trying to earn favor with God. **You are doing good works because you are confident that you have favor with Him as a gift.** I do not do good works to get Him to pay attention. I do good works because He does pay attention, in my brokenness and weakness, as a free gift. “All Christians are spotless in His sight, but not all Christians have the same service record,” one preacher said. We are all spotless as a free gift, but we do not all have the same service record.*

I want to stand before the Lord and offer to the Lord decades of having devoted service to Him in small, little, out-of-the-way things. Again, most of our service is small, unrecognized, out-of-the-way things that nobody even knows. That is the largest amount and the composite of your works. It is those little things where you feel like, “Ugh! What difference does it make?”

The Lord says, “Yeah, it does. It actually does.”

- D. Our words will be evaluated on the last day since they reveal our heart (Mt. 10:32; 12:36-37).

³⁶...for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. (Mt. 12:36-37)

³²“...whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father... (Mt. 10:32)

Even our words will be evaluated. That is a big subject. We will look at that another time.

- E. Jesus promised the apostles that they would sit on thrones in the millennial kingdom because of their obedience (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29-30). Not all believers will have governmental positions.

²⁷“We [the apostles] have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” ²⁸Jesus said to them, “...when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Mt. 19:27-28)

- F. Our works include small deeds (Lk. 19:17; 16:10-12; cf. Mt. 10:42; 25:21, 23; 19:30; 20:16, 26-27; Heb. 6:10). Our faithfulness is manifested in our life choices—99% of our godly choices and deeds are very small. Our works include the small things that we do—speaking kind words, small attitude adjustments, little acts of service, and sacrificially giving small amounts of money (Lk. 21:1-4).

²¹ **...you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. (Mt. 25:21)**

I just want to hammer on this word and stay with it: I love this idea that our small deeds matter, because, see, we can get excited by the eternal rewards and the fact that they are associated to works. Then we misapply it, thinking it is only big things. Almost all your life is little things. They think, “Well, I will not have any because I have not led like a million people to the Lord. I think only Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke get rewards” or something like that.

Beloved, it is the little things! Again, in Matthew 25—we have already read it—He said, “the few things that you did,” the few, the little ones. Our faithfulness is manifested in our life choices. The small, little acts of service, the small attitude adjustments. The widow who gave the two pennies, her sacrificial giving, Jesus said, was more than what the wealthy men gave because it was sacrificial.

- G. Our works include the secret intentions of our heart to love and obey God (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5).
- H. Jesus remembers every small act of love, even giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42). Every deed that we do is seen and rewarded by God, no matter how unnoticed it is by men (Heb. 6:10).

⁴² **And whoever gives...only a cup of cold water...he shall by no means lose his reward. (Mt. 10:42)**

¹⁰ **God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints... (Heb. 6:10)**

Every small act of love He remembers. Look at Hebrews 6:10. God charges Himself with injustice if He forgets one thing. He says, as it were, “I would be unjust if I forget any of the work that you did when you showed love to Me. I would charge myself with injustice.” Well, beloved, that is never going to happen because He remembers it all.

V. PRINCIPLE #3: ALL OF OUR WORKS ARE WRITTEN IN GOD’S BOOKS

- A. The works of humans are important and have a lasting impact—so much so that God keeps detailed records of what each person does (Dan. 7:10; cf. Ps. 69:28; 87:6; 139:16; Rev. 20:12).

¹⁰ **...the court [in heaven] was seated, and the books were opened. (Dan. 7:10)**

Principle number three, all of our works are written in His books. You think, “Okay, that is cool, but so what?” The point is this—well, there are several points, but I just want to give just a hint at this. It is a big topic actually—The works of human beings are so valuable to God, and they have such a lasting impact. Our works have remembrance and impact forever. That is staggering to us to consider that. They are so important, and the impact is so real, He writes them in books in heaven. He keeps detailed records of what people do and say, believers and unbelievers alike. Because of the blood of Jesus, He erases the sins that would disqualify us and the negativity. He erases it by the blood of Jesus.

The books record what we say and what we do, I mean the believers, in a redemptive way. I want a lot of things written in my book up there, a lot of things. Not “Well, you know, he smiled that one time and humbled himself a few months later and gave a guy a dollar on the way to somewhere once. Okay, we had a couple lean months in between.” I do not want that. I want, “I prayed. I gave. I encouraged. I blessed. I served time and time again.” I want page after page in the books. The reason I mention the books is because that is how important our actions and words are: they are recorded in the books and kept in the libraries of heaven forever. I mean

there is no book burning up there! They are there forever! It says in Daniel 7 that when the court is seated and the Father, the Ancient of Days, takes His seat, the books are opened. Oh, that is a terrifyingly glorious!

- B. God's books contain the names and actions of all believers (Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27), even their conversations (Mal. 3:16; Mt. 12:35-37).

¹⁶Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD... (Mal. 3:16)

God's books contain the names, the actions, even the conversations of His people. Look at Malachi 3. There are quite a few verses on this actually, but concerning the books, let's look at this one, Malachi 3:16, "Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened to them." The Lord wrote it down. The Lord said, "Write that in the book, what they are saying."

Here are two guys or two gals, in the neighborhood, and they are on the phone. They are just talking to each other. They say, "Well, you know what? I was a little discouraged, but then I said, 'I love the Lord. He has been so good to me,' and I just shook off this negative, self-pity thing I have been indulging in. You know what? I am going to go for God and say what God says."

The lady responds, "Yeah, me too. That is encouraging."

The Lord says, "I am writing that in the book. That is two women talking in the fear of the Lord."

You say, "Well, we were just chatting."

No, no, that is "the fear of the Lord" talk; that is in the book. Beloved, I want a lot of conversations in the book. They are not all like amazing revelations that nobody heard; it is not that. It is just everyday conversation where we are saying what God says and refusing the lies of the enemy. We are talking to each other, and we are saying, "Yeah, okay, me too. Yeah, I am going to do it, yeah." That is the book of remembrance. That is how important these things are.

VI. PRINCIPLE #4: THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF ETERNAL REWARDS

- A. In Revelation 2-3, Jesus highlighted 18 different rewards—I put these 18 promises in 8 categories: receiving heavenly garments (Rev. 3:5, 18); reigning with authority (Rev. 2:26; 3:12, 21); receiving a crown or jewels to honor one's obedience (Rev. 2:10, 17); the story of one's loving devotion to Jesus being made known (Rev. 2:17; 3:5); receiving heavenly treasure (Rev. 2:11; 3:18); receiving a spirit of revelation to encounter God with greater capacity (Rev. 2:28; 3:12, 18, 20); dining with Jesus (Rev. 2:7, 17); being vindicated before one's enemies (Rev. 3:9).

Principle number four, there are many types of eternal rewards, many types. That is why this course is so exciting to me, because we are going to be looking—I do not know if we will get to every one of them in eight weeks but—we are going to be looking at several of them in the sessions ahead.

In Revelation 2-3, Jesus identifies eighteen different rewards in two chapters. Of course, that is the most detailed list of rewards in any two chapters. There are a number of them given in the gospels that He did not mention in Revelation 2-3. So we get the whole list together. I have never added them all up, but I would add another ten or fifteen or twenty more to this eighteen to have the entire list. I do not know. Maybe by the end of the course we will have that all laid out. I listed here some of the categories of these eighteen rewards. I cluster them together in my own thinking in these categories in Revelation: heavenly garments, reigning with authority, receiving crowns, treasures, dining with Jesus, etc.

- B. As there is a great variety of gifts, ministries, and activities in the Body of Christ in this age, so there will be great diversity in them in the age to come (1 Cor. 12:4-6, 11, 18-19).

⁴There are diversities of gifts...⁵There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities...¹¹The same Spirit...distributing to each one individually...¹⁸God has set the members, each one of them, in the body as He pleased. (1 Cor. 12:4-18)

The rewards will be as varied as the situation of people or the ministries people have in the age to come will be varied. It is the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:11 where it says there are a diversity of gifts. There are different manifestations of ministries is the idea, different activities. Notice it is the same Holy Spirit. It is the same God. It is the God who never changes. So the God who never changes has diversity in callings and administration and roles in this age. Beloved, the God who never changes will have the same diversity in the age to come. It may look different, but the principle of diversity and variety will be there.

Look at verse 18, “God sets the members each one of them in the body as He pleases,” just as He pleases. That will happen in the age to come, not just in this age. It is not like when the resurrection comes God changes this part of His leadership and character. God loves creative diversity. That is why there are no two human beings exactly the same. That is why there are no two stars exactly the same. God loves creativity, His creative design, His brilliant leadership. Everyone is unique, and it will be that way in the resurrection as well. Some folks think, “Well, we all get the standard white robe. We all get the crown. We all get a harp and a cloud. We float around. We worship. I think I got it.” No, no! Not even close! It is way more interactive and diverse and dynamic and change and learning and interacting and many, many different dimensions.

VII. PRINCIPLE #5: ETERNAL REWARDS ARE GLORIOUS

- A. Paul gave us a grid for understanding eternal rewards (1 Cor. 2:9). They are spectacular and far more glorious than anyone imagines—exceedingly abundantly beyond what we think (Eph. 3:20).

⁹But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9)

¹⁹...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge...²⁰To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...²¹to Him be glory in the church... (Eph. 3:19-21)

¹⁷...affliction...is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. 4:17)

Principle number five—oh, this is my favorite, but I get to say, “This is my favorite,” all through this series, okay?—this is my favorite: eternal rewards are glorious. What do I mean by that? You see, when I take these eighteen rewards in Revelation 2-3 that we are going to look at, plus the other ones, and I have shared them with people, “You know Jesus said He will give you a white stone and your name is on it,” [often they don’t get excited about it].

I read commentaries, which say, “Back in the ancient world they had a little white rock, and if they gave you the white rock, it meant you know you were acquitted of your crime.”

I think, “That is it? That is all that is involved in that little white rock? Are you kidding?”

Let’s look at the grid Paul gave for understanding the age to come. Here is the grid. Whatever your eternal reward, however you imagine the individual ones, it has to meet this test right here. He said, “Eye has not seen nor has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart”—the imagination—“of a man”—not even the

imagination—“the things God has prepared for His people, those who love Him.” God has things prepared in the age to come that are so spectacular in glory they have never entered the imagination of a man or a woman.

Beloved, whatever you do, do not accept a dumbed-down view of these rewards. Do not reduce eternal rewards. We have these small phrases, but we have ways to expand on the possible implications of them for our understanding. Do not reduce eternal rewards to something you can easily imagine. Paul said it was beyond anything anyone has ever imagined. They are spectacular! They are more glorious! Like I said in the other message, you take Walt Disney, and Steven Spielberg, and ten more others, times 1,000, and each reward is far more glorious than they could have all collectively come up with in all their imaginations. Jesus could say, “You are not even close to the dimension of what that reward is.”

Paul mentions it again in Ephesians. Look, he said of the love that Jesus has, “it passes knowledge.” Meaning, it is beyond the human grasp of understanding. It is His love, but it is more than the love; it is the relationship. It is who we are in the resurrection, what eternal life is about. It is far beyond what human knowledge has grasped in this age. Paul goes on and makes it really clear, “It is exceedingly abundant beyond what you think.”

So I encourage people to imagine what could that white stone be. Imagine it goes far beyond Walt Disney and Spielberg and everybody else. What could it possibly be? Beloved, that is far too low what that reward is. It is definitely not just a little white rock with your initials on it, I guarantee you that.

2 Corinthians 4:17, “Our affliction in this age,” bearing persecution, being faithful in difficulty, “is working for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.” Beloved, there is a far more exceeding glory in the resurrected body, in the city, in the interaction, in the rewards. All of those together fit in this category.

- B. God is the architect of the New Jerusalem—this is an example of His spectacular creativity. Since He never changes, we can assume that eternal rewards will be spectacular—commensurate with the glory of the New Jerusalem and our resurrected body that is conformed to Jesus’ own (Phil. 3:21).

²¹**Will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body... (Phil. 3:21)**

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

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

Think of it this way: God is the architect of the New Jerusalem. He is the designer of the city, the New Jerusalem, in Revelation 21-22. That is only a glimpse of His creative abilities. We look at the celestial city. It has transparent gold, and foundation stones of jewels, and walls and pearl gates, and rivers, and the tree of life, and fruit, and angels, and music, and fragrance, and beauty beyond imagination. I can imagine the Lord saying, “Whatever that is, everything I am doing associated with that city is **that** glorious.” So when you think of rewards, think of the Man who is the designer of that city, who created and built that city. He is the one who determined the rewards. They have the same spectacular, glorious dimension of the glory that is beyond our imagination.

Whatever we imagine about these rewards as we look at them—I am just setting up your imagination, setting up in your mind a framework so you are approaching it thinking—whatever we think, it is far too low. That is the conclusion. When we are done with these eight sessions, no matter how far we push it, it is far lower than what it actually is. I want to set this general framework of the Bible where we can see some of the possible implications. Then, all of a sudden, you see yourself in those rewards. Then, all of a sudden, you are seeing what you might be doing down the road a couple hundred years. Then, we are in our internship right now, our

seventy, eighty years on the earth, and we are doing our internship right now because we want to be released into our greater ministry on the earth.

Some people say, “That is really cool!”

I say, “That is not cool; that is actual. That is actual.”

These rewards need to be commensurate with the glory of the New Jerusalem and the glory of the resurrected body. Our resurrected body will be like Jesus’ body. I mean Jesus’ body; look at this in Matthew 7. We will look at this a lot more later. His face shines like the sun. His clothing is bright, dazzling like light. Beloved, you are going to have the same principles, not the same measure of glory, but the same principles in the constitution of your physical, resurrected body. Your face will shine with brilliant, beautiful light. The garments—you cannot imagine the wardrobe you are going to have! It is far better than the one you have now. I mean, you take the most illustrious wardrobe of the queen or the king or whoever, anywhere in history, and the wardrobe of the saints, the faithful saints, is far more elaborate and diverse and beautiful than the most extensive, elaborate wardrobe of anyone in human history. Picture whoever that woman is who had a different and most amazing dress every time, whoever she is, and, beloved, the faithful saints will have an array of garments far more glorious.

VIII. PRINCIPLE #6: WE COMPARE SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE TO GAIN INSIGHT

- A. We compare scripture with scripture to gain insight on the possible implications of the glorious nature of various eternal rewards. Jesus gave simple descriptions of each reward, knowing that more insight could be gained by searching the Scriptures for parallel passages.

Principle number six, we cannot tie down all the details, but we can go a lot further into what the implications might be if we study the Scriptures and compare scripture with scripture. We can see some of the glorious nature of eternal rewards. Jesus gave some simple descriptions. Again, the white stone, the heavenly garments, the crown, He gave just simple phrases. He knew that we can get insight when we compare the scriptures with other scriptures about crowns, and garments, and thrones, and all of these things.

Let’s look at an example. We will break this down a lot more, but I just want to give you a grid, a framework, as to where our minds should be. We want to push the scripture boundaries a bit. I mean, we want to be faithful to the Scriptures, but we want to search out the Scriptures and what it might mean. We do not want to be dogmatic where the Scripture is not dogmatic. We cannot be dogmatic on this, but we can have our holy imagination stirred up within the boundaries of the written Word of God.

- B. The priestly garments that God designed give insight into His creative abilities related to garments. God designed them for beauty and to show both His glory and the dignity of the priesthood. An “elaborate crown” was put on Joshua the high priest; it also points to God’s creative abilities to design crowns with beauty and confer honor and authority on His servants (Zech. 6:11-14).

²You shall make holy garments for Aaron [high priest]... for glory and for beauty... (Ex. 28:2)

Here is an example of comparing scripture with scripture to gain insight on eternal rewards. We go back to Exodus 28. Here is the Lord speaking. This is the Lord talking to Moses, “Moses, make some garments for your brother. He is a priest, the high priest. He is one of My servants. Here is what I want: I want him glorious and beautiful.” Now this is God’s idea to make him garments like this. He could have made them beggarly and poor or really humble and downcast. He would say, “No, no, no! I am the God of the New Jerusalem. I want those garments glorious and beautiful.” He designed them. There are quite a few passages on the garments that God

described in the Old Testament. We take those passages, and it gives us insight into what God thinks about garments. We do not know exactly what, but we know that He is the one who said these things, so we know He thinks this way. God designed garments for beauty, to show the glory of the office of the priest, to show the dignity of the one chosen that He put His favor on. The garments in the age to come will have a comparison. We can have this “Scripture with Scripture” insight on a number of these different eternal rewards to grow in our understanding on what some of the implications might be.

Another one I like is Zechariah 6:11 and 14—I’ll just kind of fit it in here—the elaborate crown. Here is God speaking. God says to make an elaborate crown for the priest. “Make it elaborate. It is My idea, because when I make a crown it is for beauty.” The design, the meaning, the message in it, the honor, the authority that it connotes is all a part of the crown itself. When we study crowns, we want to see whatever God has said in the Bible about crowns, when He said it directly by His own voice. That will give us insight.

- C. The Scripture tell us that the rich man in Hades had a meaningful conversation with Abraham and that he remembered his family members on earth, etc. (Lk. 16:23-28).

²³**And being in torments in Hades, he [the rich man]... saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom...** ²⁵**Abraham said, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things...”** ²⁷**Then he said, “I beg...that you would send him to my father’s house,”** ²⁸**for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.”** (Lk. 16:23-28)

This is a different example of how the Scripture speaks compared with the Scripture. Here is Jesus telling a story about a man who died. Jesus is telling us how a man who died, who is in Hades, how he interacted. If Jesus gave us insight of how a dead man interacted after this age, we know how humans interact; it gives us a hint. This man, the rich man—you can read it on your own—had meaningful conversation with Abraham. He knew who Lazarus was. He remembered his family members. He had sensation in his body. His tongue was hot. He wanted a drink. He had memory, he had logic, and he had many things. So when we put the Scripture with the Scripture, this is how we know life after this life is going to have these characteristics in it.

- D. We gain insight into eternal rewards by seeing what the Scripture says about God’s leadership over the angelic realm. Angels have varying roles, capacities, and degrees of glory in their garments.

¹**I saw another angel...having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.** (Rev. 18:1)

⁶**Clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.** (Rev. 15:6)

When we look at the Scriptures, we see God’s leadership over the angelic realm. Because God never changes, His leadership over angels gives us insight into His creative design, His leadership, what He thinks, and what are possibilities in His mindset.

Look at Revelation 18:1. Here is this one angel who has so much authority the whole earth is illumined with his glory. So God has created beings that are lower than saints who have a glory so intense it illumines the whole earth. That angel has not shown up yet, by the way. Lord would say, “Oh, I have angels like that. I have a lot that are not like that, and I have some that are like that.” The saints are higher than angels. The angels have varying roles, varying capacities, varying degree of glory in their garments. I mean, the subject is vast.

IX. PRINCIPLE #7: WE CAN GAIN INSIGHT FROM THE NATURAL REALM

- A. We gain insight into implications of the glorious nature of various eternal rewards by observing aspects of our natural life that God declared as “very good” (Gen 1:31) and that correspond to our spiritual life (1 Cor. 15:46). In Jesus’ resurrection, His body, clothing, speech, food, and travel have some correspondence to earthly life. In the resurrection, our five senses will function in a similar way to now, yet enhanced by the power of the Spirit. We will possess supernatural abilities to learn, remember, teach, establish new relationships, sing, play musical instruments, etc.

²⁶God said, “Let Us make man in Our image...let them have dominion over...all the earth...”

³¹God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. (Gen. 1:26-31)

⁴⁶However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. (1 Cor. 15:46)

Principle seven, and we will end with this. We can gain insight about eternal rewards by looking at the natural realm. Now we have to be careful, as our insight is limited, but in the natural world there are glorious thumbprints of God of His leadership, and His creative design, and His intelligence, and His passion for beauty and glory in His people.

Look in Genesis 1:26. He said, “Let Us make humans in Our image.” So we know that humans have a capacity to interact, which reflects God’s. So we are going to have that same capacity in the age to come. We know that because Jesus came back in His resurrected body, and He could talk, He could teach, He ate, He could embrace people, I mean many things in His humanity in the resurrection. The saints will have those same capacities and, when you read this in context to the eternal rewards, the implications of these eternal rewards begin to be more and more encouraging.

Look what it says in Genesis 1:31. When God created—this was before their sin—His thumbprint was on creation. God said, “It is very, very good. It is very good.” When God says something is very good, we know that there are elements of the natural created order that are very good. Now the taint of sin has brought other challenges and dimensions, but there is still that dimension of God’s genius in the natural order, so we can look at things even in the natural, and they give us some implications about what it might be like in the age to come.

Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 15:46. He said, “However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural realm.” In other words, God established understanding to humans of the natural realm before He gave understanding to humans of the spirit realm.

Humans saw the glory of God in the natural realm. He said, as it were, “The natural is first, and then I will unpack the supernatural to them. They will see the larger picture of which the natural is only a snapshot.” We do get a portrait, a snapshot, of the glory of God in the natural world.

I give a little bit on that here. You can read that. In the resurrection, our five senses will function similarly to how they do now, but in the enhanced glory of God. We will have supernatural abilities, but we will still learn, we will remember, we will teach. You will develop new relationships. In the resurrection, you are not going to get a chip of omniscience, like as if you are resurrected and they implant you with omniscience, so now you know everything. No, you do not know anything more than the moment before you stepped over there. You will learn it line by line. You will learn it faster, and it will touch you more deeply, but you will learn forever. You will be learning and teaching and growing in your understanding forever. It will never get boring. It will never get static.

Here is the one I like: we will sing and play instruments. Man, I am going to be on the worship team! I do not care what Misty or any of them say; I am going to get on the worship team! I cannot pass an audition down here, but just give me a resurrected body and let me loose!

B. We get a glimpse of God’s glory in the vastness, beauty, and diversity of creation (Ps. 19:1).

¹The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. (Ps. 19:1)

We get a glimpse of God’s glory—the vastness, the beauty, the diversity, the creativity—when we look at the skies and the heavens.

C. In this age, there are garments for different occasions. Garments express many different things. I assume there will also be many different garments and many occasions in the age to come. We must not reduce His rewards to what we can easily imagine.

I mentioned here the garments things again. Just an example that in the natural realm we see the beauty of garments in the different situations, the different fabrics, the different meaning. Those kinds of things that are true and obvious in the natural, I believe they will have some implication in the way things are in the age to come.

So, beloved, no matter what somebody tells you, do not let anybody reduce rewards to something that is easy to imagine. These rewards are glorious and spectacular, and they are yours. He does not ask you to be gifted or smart or to have a lot of friends or have a lot of money or education. All He asks for is to be humble. Serve people, and be humble. “Anybody can do this,” He would say, “and you can be great. Serve people, be humble, obey Me. It does not matter what your background is, your pedigree, your opportunity. Because your opportunity is in the grace of God. If you are humble, and you are obedient, and you serve people, I am recording it all in my book.”

The great exchange is going to happen when the Lord appears. I call the judgment seat of Christ, “the great equalizer.” Everything changes on that day.

Well, amen and amen! Let’s stand.

Next week we are going to look at eight more principles, then we are going to look at the rewards themselves.

Here we are, Lord, before Your presence. Lord, we say yes to You.

Just take a moment in your heart and say, “Yes, Lord. I did not get all of this, but I want to get it all.”

You got to get me on the worship team, Misty! What, not ‘til the resurrection? She is probably right; she is probably right.

Here we are, Lord. We are in Your presence. Come and touch us.

We are just going to wait on the Lord for a moment.

Lord, what are You saying, right now even? What do You want to highlight?

We are not going to hurry. Let’s just wait for a few minutes.

More, Lord. We ask for Your manifest presence, a greater measure of Your presence.

The Lord wants to encourage and minister to some people who have been tempted with the spirit of despair. What I mean by that is, you love Jesus, but you are thinking, “I do not know. I have not done anything. The years have gone by, and I just cannot see the value of it. My heart is hurting over it.”

The Lord would say, “No, there is a different story. I have a different story than you have.”

You are saying, “Lord, I want to feel what You are feeling. I want to see this more. I want to be a part of it. I want to, even now.” You are being tempted with real discouragement right now, which is very normal, by the way. It is not because you are doing anything wrong per se. The enemy wants to accuse you and condemn you, make you give up. If you are saying, “Yeah, I feel that, that sting in my heart. I just need another shot in the arm, so to speak, of encouragement.” I want to encourage you to come forward.

Anyone in the room, you are just needing a new beginning, a new renewal of your heart. Come on up and receive prayer.