Session 1 Introducing the Judgment Seat and Eternal Rewards

1. The Judgment Seat of Christ: the place of reward

*I am beginning an eight-part series on eternal rewards. This is the first session. Although I am doing this session on Sunday, the rest are going to be on Friday night, I am wanting to bring our whole local church and our body here into a broad-strokes overview of this subject. I am going to break down the details of it in a far more detailed way on Friday night for the seven Friday nights.*

*This subject of the judgement seat of Christ and eternal rewards is one of the most important themes in the Word of God. Jesus talked on this subject more than any other teacher in the Word of God. Because He knew the most about this subject, therefore He saw its value like no one else. This theme is referred to like every other page in the New Testament. Maybe not exactly, but it is a major theme. It is mostly neglected in the teaching of the Body of Christ.*

*I have been really captured by this subject over the years. I am going to share an experience I had about forty years ago that really stirred my heart up. Since that time, every time I go into another city and go to a Christian bookstore, or now online, I look for books on this subject. There are not very many of them. By neglecting this subject it brings the Body of Christ into a place of real weakness. It is really a missed opportunity. Even godly believers do not talk much about this subject, but it was a subject talked often about and taught about by the apostles.*

*In October 1978, about forty years ago, I was a young pastor and had a powerful, life-shifting, supernatural encounter. I have shared this many times over the years because it has marked me that dramatically. I think of this encounter on a regular basis, not every day, but I mean many times in a week I will think about this encounter. It is as vivid and real in my mind today as it was near forty years ago.*

*I went to bed one night, and it started in a dream, but it ended up in a visionary kind of encounter. It is hard to describe exactly what the term is. I was in this dream, yay, more than a dream. I was kneeling before the Lord. I literally saw the Lord in this dream experience. It is the only time I have ever had an encounter of this level, of a kind like this. He was looking right at me with a very serious look. He was not angry, but He was sober. He was serious. He said the most startling, shocking words to me. He said, “You are saved, but your life was wasted.” I was really troubled by that because I knew I was kneeling before the Lord. Again, I have never seen the Lord in a dream like this, directly face to face like this, except for this one time at this level.*

*I had been a dedicated, devout believer for maybe six, seven years at that time. I thought that I was seeking the Lord hard as far as I knew. I thought, “My life was wasted?” I began to protest this idea in my mind. I did not say it because of who I was in front of. I thought, “This is a mistake. This is a mistake. You have the wrong person. I am reading biographies of the great missionaries, and fasting and praying, and seeking the Lord, and giving money, and really pouring myself out in every way I knew, serving people and trying to be humble and so on.” Notice I said, “Trying!”*

*Then a thought rose up in me by the Holy Spirit, very strongly resounding in me, “It is impossible to manipulate the Man Christ Jesus.” Because I was saying in my mind, “You have the wrong person,” the Holy Spirit was saying, “You will never change His mind about what He has evaluated.”*

*So I was panic stricken! I had this sense of dread. So I cried out, “Can I have another chance? Can I have another chance at life, natural life?”*

*Then the next thought that rose up in me by the Holy Spirit—it was more than a thought; it was a resounding word in my spirit—“Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed unto a person to die once, and then they are evaluated. You do not get a second chance. You cannot go back and do it again.”*

*So I was left with this tremendous sense of loss and regret. I mean I was weeping. I was heartbroken. It was wrenching. As I was weeping, and I was kneeling before the Lord in this dream experience. Tears were flowing down and my shirt, the T-shirt that I was wearing, was wet in this dream.*

*Suddenly I woke up. I was not in bed! I was a couple steps over in the room. I did not know how I got there. I did not remember getting up and going there. I was kneeling in the exact same posture I was in that dream, and my T-shirt was wet with tears. I thought, “What? How did I get from there to here? What was that?” It was very disturbing. I sat there for a while, very sad and perplexed. I prayed, “Lord, I do not understand. Why would You say this to me?” I was in my early twenties, a young pastor, and, again, feeling sorrow, regret, pain, perplexity.*

*The Holy Spirit made it clear to me that He was allowing me to feel that regret and sorrow so I would live in a way now so that I would not have regret on the last day when I stood before the Lord. It was like the Holy Spirit was saying, “Let’s fast-forward many years. If you live at a certain low level of dedication which is common in the Body of Christ, if you are content with that standard of dedication, fast-forward some decades and you will stand before the Lord and you will have regret.”*

*So I got to feel the anguish and the sorrow of that feeling. It was, in retrospect, one of the most gracious encounters that the Lord could give me because it wounded my heart way back then. As I understood it, I said, “Lord, I fear regret more than anything else in life. I don’t want regret on that day.” I believe that there are many believers that, when they stand before the Lord on that day, will be aware of how they wasted their life in a negative sense.*

*Beloved, the greatest appointment in your life is yet future. It is with a Man. He is a great King. He is Christ Jesus. Every one of you who is a believer, you will meet Him on that day. There is an appointed day, and it is the most significant appointment in your life. When your eyes meet His eyes on that day, whatever He is thinking about you is the most significant evaluation of your life in this age.*

*I do not care how many people are applauding you or how many people are criticizing you, one extreme or the other or both; none of that will matter, only what is in His mind when you meet eye to eye. Not so far from now I will meet Him face to face, and He will remember that day. I will understand then how gracious it was that He let me have that heart-wounding, piercing experience. Again, I have thought about that day thousands and thousands of times.*

*So today is just a broad-strokes overview. We are not going to go into detail, but on Fridays we will break down many of these details with a lot more verses and a lot more elaborate explanation.*

* 1. Each believer 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 like the Olympic Games. God gives each believer assignments in life that are based on our capacities—physical, mental, emotional, financial, circumstantial, etc.

10We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ…12Then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Rom. 14:10-12)

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)

*Paul gave a very important declaration. He was very gracious to make us aware of this ahead of time. In Romans 14:10, Paul said that we will all stand, every one of us, before the judgment seat of Christ. Each of us will give an account of himself to the Lord. We will give an account for what we did with what He gave us. Now every one of us has a very unique life situation; every single person does. Your life situation is based on your physical abilities or lack of, your giftings or the giftings you do not have, the finances, your emotional makeup, your family situation, life circumstances, the generation you live in. All of these go together to form a unique setting and context for every individual. The Lord would say, “I will only have you answer according to what I gave you in that composite of all those things.” The Lord is very gracious in His evaluation. He is very merciful. He is very, very tender, very loving towards us.*

* + 1. Two Greek words are translated as “judgment seat”– bēma and kritērion.
    2. “While these two words can be used interchangeably to a degree, bēma generally denotes a place of prominence, while kritērion specifically refers to a place of prosecution. Thus bēma is used most often for the reward seat at athletic events while kritērion is used exclusively for the court of justice. At the judgment seat (bēma) of the Grecian games, the contestants did not face judicial punishment, but received rewards. Similarly, the Christian will not be condemned at Christ’s bēma, but will gain rewards, or suffer loss of the same, depending upon how he has run the race.” *(Samuel Hoyt)*

*Now it is interesting that the word, judgment seat, here is the word, bema. Paul uses it two times: here in Romans 14, then again in 2 Corinthians 5. We will look at that in a moment. The judgment seat is the bema seat. The bema in the Greek culture was a familiar term. It was a raised platform where judges sat in an athletic contest—like the Olympic games—to give an award or where a political ruler sat to pass sentence in a legal case (Mt. 27:19). So using the term, judgment seat, or bema, had both a positive or a negative connotation.*

*The Lord is eager to reward even the smallest things that we do to show our love towards Him. He said, “Surely I say to you, even if you give a cup of cold water, surely I will reward you.” See, rewards are Jesus expressing the way He feels about the way we love Him. Rewards are Jesus expressing how He feels about the way you loved Him in this life.*

*Again, the bema seat was the place of the judge to give the gold, silver, bronze metal. That is where we will stand. It is mostly positive. The negative comes in when we understand that we lost opportunities because of our neglecting the will of God or making wrong choices even as believers.*

*Look at the second time the judgment seat is used by Paul; he emphasized this theme. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he said that we must all appear before the bema seat. Again the bema is the stand where the judge was, giving the Olympic awards, the metals, the wreaths. I am using contemporary terminology. We must all appear there. Again, it is a profoundly positive reality that each one would receive the things done in their body, the things they actually did.*

*It is according to what they have done, not just their intentions. Intentions are important, but it is what they actually do, whether good or bad. Now this phrase, whether good or bad, has created a certain amount of perplexity to believers. We look at that and think, “Good or bad? Bad? Why the word bad? Paul, what are you talking about? Paul, haven’t you read the book of Romans. that salvation is by grace? How did bad get in there?” Well, I am not going to address that right now, but I will on one of the Friday nights. We will put about six or seven verses together and describe what this means, at least my understanding of it, from the Scripture, both the good and bad dimensions.*

*Eternal rewards are a significant part of our destiny, our life, God’s plan for our life. God’s plan for your life does not end when you die physically. God’s plan for your life goes on for billions of years. God has a plan for your seventy years on the earth, not that everybody lives that long. You know, Psalm 90 says that God has given unto men seventy years, eighty due to strength. God has a plan for your seventy years, but God also has a plan for your thousand-year career, your assignment on the earth in the millennial kingdom. Every believer has an assignment on the earth with a physical, resurrected body living in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem comes down to the earth, reigning on the earth for 1,000 years. Beloved your 1,000-year assignment is as real and profound and powerful as your seventy-year assignment is.*

*Most people do not think of their 1,000-year assignment; they only think of their seventy-year assignment. I want to encourage you to think beyond. I think often of what I will be doing in 300 years. You may think, “Oh, that is kind of cute.” No, no, this is real. There is enough information, a framework of understanding, surrounding the issue of eternal rewards and describing reigning on the earth in various facets of it. There is a lot of details we do not have, but there is a general framework from Genesis to Revelation that, if we are hungry for it, we can put together and get a broad framework of understanding about what some of our life will be like at that time. Not all the details but we can know more than just a little bit.*

*I am going to be alive in 300 years, and so are you. You are going to have a physical, resurrected body, living, reigning on the earth, for real. You will have a work assignment. I would rather call it your career. It is more than an assignment. It is more than a job. It is really like a career. It is a vast part of who you are. Then we have one past the Millennium; that is a bigger subject.*

* 1. Paul gave us details about the most important appointment in our life—the judgment seat of Christ.

8Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor…11No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each one’s work…will be revealed by fire… 14If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:8-15)

*We will look at this really briefly, just to get you a working knowledge of some of the key verses without going into detail this morning, but just so we are all on the same page. This is one of the more elaborate, detailed passages on the judgment seat of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:8-15. This is about the most important appointment in your life that is yet future. Beloved, you will not be one minute late to that appointment, and it will be the most significant appointment of your life. I want to be prepared for it. I say, “Lord, shock me now. Do not shock me then. I do not want to be shocked then. I do not want the Lord to say, ‘Your life was wasted. I love you, you are in My family, but your life was wasted.’ I do not want to hear those words. Shock me now. Tell me my blind spots now, Lord. Get my attention now. Do not make me wait until then.” That is one reason I am teaching eight sessions on this subject, because most of us are very unfamiliar with this topic, but there is a lot in the Bible on it.*

* 1. ***No other foundation***: The gift of righteousness through Jesus’ death on the cross is our foundation (Rom. 5:17). We are *saved* by faith in Jesus’ work, as a free gift, but are *rewarded* according to our works. Our entrance into heaven is not based on our works, though our role in heaven is.

17…who receive…the gift of righteousness…through the One, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17)

*In verse 8, Paul says that each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor or his own work. In verse 11, so there is no confusion, Paul says that there is no other foundation that anybody can lay except for the foundation of Jesus. Meaning, salvation is by faith, the free gift of God. We receive the gift of righteousness as an absolutely free gift based on what He did, not on what we do. That is the foundation reality of the kingdom of God. So Paul was obviously very clear about that. He was saying, in effect, “I want you not to lose sight of that, but do not think that is the end of the story either.” Verse 11, there is no other foundation than this.*

*In verse 12, he explains that anyone who builds on this foundation—that means your life choices as a believer build on this foundation. Your life choices will be esteemed by God as gold, silver, precious stones, or some of your life choices will be esteemed by God as wood, hay, and straw.*

*Verse 13, Paul said that each person’s life work—which is the composite of thousands and thousands of little choices. He is talking about your work. It is more than just your ministry to other people. It is your life that you built upon the foundation—is going to be revealed, the nature of it, the truth of it, by fire, God’s fire. Again we will look at this passage in far more detail on Friday night.*

*Verse 14, but if anyone’s work which he builds upon the foundation of the grace of God, the foundation of Jesus, if that work endures or lasts through the fire of God, that man, that woman, will receive a reward. Meaning my words and my deeds, the way I spend time, and the way I spend money. Let’s just break it down really simply. My words and deeds, my conversation later on today, tomorrow, the next day, and what I do and how I spend time and money—the composite of them—the Lord tests the nature of them with His fire. Some of those God will call gold, silver, and precious stones. Fire does not hurt gold and silver, but some of them will be outside of the will of God, not in obedience to the Scripture, scriptural principles, Sermon-on-the-Mount type lifestyle, and they will be like wood, hay, and straw. Wood, hay, and straw, when the fire comes, it consumes them.*

*He goes on in verse 15 that if anyone’s work is burned up—their life choices—that believer, though they are in heaven, they are in the family of God, God loves them and they love God, that believer in heaven will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved yet as though through fire. Again, we will break this down in more detail later. He will suffer loss. That is a theme I have almost rarely heard about in my entire Christian life. No, almost no one will break down that passage. A few teachers have. I have studied it from various ones, and I am very grateful for the little bit out there.*

*It is like “We do not want to deal with that.” We think it will go away if we do not deal with it. The ostrich effect, you put your head in the ground and, if we do not look at it, there is no real problem. There will be people that will suffer loss; believers will. I believe that means they lose potential rewards.*

* 1. ***Rewards***: Rewards are about Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we loved Him in this life, about working closely with Him in reigning over the earth, and about God vindicating our choices for righteousness (Heb. 1:9). Rewards are not about us gaining superiority or status before others. Jesus called us to reject the “secular paradigm” of having status and authority (Mt. 20:25).

*I like to say this over and over: rewards are about Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we loved Him on the earth* ***in this life****, because we will be on the earth in the next life, too, living in the New Jerusalem, reigning on the earth. The New Jerusalem is coming down to the earth, so it is one big reality. Now the reason I say this is because I have taught on this subject for forty years, ever since I had that encounter with the Lord about forty years ago. It is a very important subject to me because it is very important in the Scripture. I think about this a lot.*

*I had a number of believers that say, “Nah! I do not like that reward thing.”*

*I understand a little bit of what they are saying. First I tell them, “Well, actually you do not get to vote on whether it is real or not real. There is a Man named Jesus who has established it. So you liking it or not liking it does not change any of it.”*

*What I think most people mean when they say, “I do not like the idea of rewards,”—because people get really stirred up by this subject, so I am giving them the benefit of the doubt— is that it makes them feel pressure, and it makes them think, “Well, I have to live a different way. Whoa! That means it really matters what I do. What? That is heavy!”*

*One guy said, “This doctrine creates pressure on me.”*

*I answered, “So?”*

*He said, “Well, we are Americans. In American culture, we do not like pressure, so therefore it cannot be in the Bible if we do not like it.”*

*Well, the culture of heaven is not the Western culture of today. Godly pressure is called “the fear of the Lord.” I respond, “You cannot dismiss biblical truth because you do not like how you feel about it when you think about how you are living. It does not go away just because you do not like it.” I say, “It is way better to see what the Bible means. It is a glorious reality!”*

*The reason some do not like it is because they have a secular view of eternal rewards, a secular paradigm. They are thinking of eternal rewards as ‘I am going to get rewarded in the age to come, in the millennial kingdom. I am going to be strutting in front of people. I am going to be over people, and I am going to be bossing them around. I am going to have more treasure, more stuff than others. I am superior in my dedication on the earth, and my superiority is going to be trumpeted aloud.” That is a secular view of eternal rewards. I understand their not being interested in that, but that is not what eternal rewards are about. They are reading a biblical truth, then interpreting it through a secular paradigm. Jesus said it really clearly in Matthew 20, where He said that the Gentiles, the unbelievers, approach authority and honor that way, not the kingdom of God.*

*Rewards are how Jesus feels about the way we loved Him. You know Jesus is so wealthy. He has so much treasure. He can afford to be lavish with His rewards because He has so much treasure. He has so much. We give a cup of cold water because we love Him, we take one step of obedience, and we get a mile of blessing. It is like, “Jesus, really?”*

*Some person might ask, “Do we earn these rewards?”*

*I answer, “No, no, you cannot take a step and get a mile of blessing. That is not earning it, trust me. It is way beyond anything you could earn because the extravagance of the reward is so great.”*

*You know it says that God loves a cheerful giver. Beloved, Jesus is the ultimate cheerful giver. You will never out-give Him. You give a little bit in humility, service, and sacrifice, and, again, a step of obedience is a mile of blessing. He can afford it. He loves it. He would say, “I want you to know how I feel about that little thing you did because you love Me. I am filled with love, and I am really rich, and I really like you, and I am going to make a big point out of it because that is who I am.”*

*Eternal rewards are also about working in close proximity with Him in that which is precious. What I mean by that is that God the Father has given Jesus a mandate in the millennial kingdom to fill the earth with His glory in the fullest sense. I mean, that mandate is even now in this age, but it happens in fullness then. He is going to rule all the nations. He is going to have resurrected believers partnering with Him and ruling the nations. In ruling the nations—we will spend a whole session on that. There are a whole lot of Bible verses and a lot of implications to that—when believers rule the nations, they will do it in partnership with Him. He will actually have leadership meetings with His people at various levels. They will be together working just like in ministry now. We make leadership choices in ministry, and the Lord is with us. Even our personalities are reflected in those choices. It is not like we are robotic, just echoing, just reading from a piece of paper, “Okay, we make this choice; we make this choice.” No, we are really going to rule, and our personalities will be involved. We will be interfacing with Him in a close and personal way. The greater the sphere of authority, the more interaction that will be necessary. That is a big, big subject. I do not want to develop it now. Think of the people that you love and admire the most. Do you want to work closely with them? Yeah, of course you do. Not everybody will work in the same proximity to Jesus; it will be related to our responsibilities.*

*Our responsibilities will be related to our humility and obedience in this age, not our gifting in this age, but our humility in this age, our diligence, our faithfulness. You can be the most ungifted person, nobody paying attention to you, seemingly not making any impact on anybody hardly, and if you are obeying the Lord and walking in humility you can be called great in the millennial kingdom. God will call your life choices great. It is a remarkable reality. I call the judgment seat of Christ the great equalizer, because some people in this age who are great in the eyes of men now and making a big impact, if they are not responding to the Lord in diligence and humility their life choices will not be called great in the age to come. Somebody else, a little guy, nobody ever heard of, the Lord will day, “Your choices were great.” Everything will flip around. It is a glorious reality.*

*I want to be in some of those leadership meetings with Jesus. You know Jesus though by the Holy Spirit will be omnipresent. He will be everywhere by the Spirit, but He will still have a physical body where He in His physical person is at one place at one time. His physical body will not be in a thousand places at one time. Just like in His earthly ministry He was in Galilee, then later He was in Jerusalem. He was not in Galilee and Jerusalem the same time in His physical body. He interacted with people at various levels. Again, by the Holy Spirit we will have communication and feel His presence and know His heart and communicate with Him by the Spirit. There is more than that. He is ruling the nations, and His people will be involved with Him. What a remarkable reality!*

*Another reason God gives rewards is because God so loves righteousness that He vindicates every choice of righteousness, even though it is unnoticed and out of the sight of others. He so loves righteousness that He is going to make known and manifest His zeal over your righteous choices. He might say, “I have to do this. I love righteousness. I cannot let the seeds of your small acts of righteousness to go unnoticed. I am going to bring them to fullness, and I am going to celebrate them in front of you because that is who I am.”*

*Well, some folks say, “Uh, I still do not like eternal rewards.” They cannot say it is not in the Bible because it is all through the Bible. They can say they do not like it, which is mostly because they are not familiar with the subject. Again, their idea is of people strutting in their superiority and being the boss over people. That is not at all the biblical view of eternal rewards.*

* 1. The saints will have great joy in working closely with Jesus in reigning over much (Mt. 25:21).

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

*Look here in Matthew 25. This is talking about the last day when Jesus says, “I will make you ruler over many things.” Notice when He says, “Enter into the joy of the Lord.” Believers will have greater satisfaction and joy when these rewards are released than they could ever imagine.*

*So I have shared this verse with some, and they said, “I do not like it.”*

*I said, “I think you are going to. I think you have a big surprise coming. I think you are going to love the way He is moved by the way you loved Him. I think you are going to love it. I have a feeling you have a surprise coming ahead of you.” Why? Because you can disregard the study of rewards, still live godly, and it still works right. I find the study of them is motivating. That is why Jesus taught on it so often. The apostles did because the apostles built their life around this reality.*

* 1. Jesus called us to “buy gold” and “lay up treasures in heaven” by developing our relationship with Him and obeying Him in what we do and say and in how we spend our time and money (Jn. 14:15).

18I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich. (Rev. 3:18)

20… but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. (Mt. 6:20)

*Jesus told the Laodiceans, “Buy gold from Me.”*

*Be unashamed about it. Be bold about it. Be upfront about it. I mean do not stay in a corner and think, “Lord, I kind of would like those, but I do not want to be selfish.”*

*He might say, “Selfish? This is about you and Me and how I feel about you and our proximity together and our connection together. No, no, this is about love; this is not about selfish.”*

*“Well, I do not know. I don’t want to buy gold. What if I just get a couple little copper coins?”*

*The Lord might say, “No. Do you know who I am? How generous I am? How wealthy I am? I want you to go all the way.”*

*Look what He says in Matthew 6 right in the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. “Lay up treasure in heaven.” He urges us to do this. He urges us to think on this. He urges us to make decisions with this in view. I make life choices, not all choices—I need to make more of them—but I make a number of choices based on this verse. I want treasure. I would give up treasure in this age because I want treasure in that age. You can have treasure in this age, but you need to use it rightly to convert it. Beloved, the exchange rate is really high right now. You can use your money in this age and it can be exchanged, converted to treasure. You have to use it kingdom ways though. I want it. I am unashamed about it. I want to go for this. After I had that encounter with the Lord and studied it out in the Bible and found out how important this was to Jesus, in His teaching and the apostles, I said, “I am going for this.”*

*I have heard the phrase, you have too, of that guy or that girl who is so heavenly-minded they are no earthly good. It is kind of a cool, little phrase, but here is the problem: I have never met that human being, never. I have never met a heavenly-minded person who is no earthly good, because the more heavenly-minded they are, the more impact they make in righteousness on the earth. I do not mean the numbers are bigger, but the depth of holiness and purity is real. They make a much bigger impact if they are heavenly-minded.*

*What I think people really mean by that phrase, which is okay to use if they want, is that they are spacey and disorganized. I think it is better if somebody is spacey and disorganized to say they are spacey and disorganized; do not say they are heavenly-minded, because if you are heavenly minded, you will be greatly effective on the earth. Again I am not talking about numbers, but you will move people to righteousness because it is a part of your life in a deep way.*

* 1. Paul exhorted the saints to seek those things which are above—this includes eternal rewards.

1…seek those things which are above, where Christ is…2Set your mind on things above…   
(Col. 3:1-2)

*Paul said the same thing in Colossians 3:1, “Seek those things above.” He says it again in verse 2, “Set your mind on it.” That is, think on it, study it, talk to God about it, talk to people about it. Give yourself to this. Do not make this a peripheral, casual, secondary idea. Make this important.*

*Now the things above are not only eternal rewards. It is the New Jerusalem. It is the kingship of Jesus. It is the glory of God covering the earth. There are a number of things are involved, but eternal rewards are clearly a part of this. Again, maybe you think of your fifty-year career. Maybe you are twenty, and you think, “I have got fifty more years in my career.” That is good. That is wisdom. The book of Proverbs tells you that is good. Beloved, think of your thousand-year career too, for real. For real! You will be doing something in your resurrected physical body in 300 years. Prepare for it now.*

*Nobody thinks it is odd that a young med school student will go to ten years of university and med school and residency, pay a couple hundred thousand dollars, work night and day, and pay hundreds of thousands of dollars, a couple hundred thousand dollars, to be a physician, because for fifty years they have a career. That is wise to go hard for ten years for the fifty that are coming. Beloved, use the same math. Go hard for God for seventy years for the 1,000. The numbers are actually better, and the glory is far more intense. Now, you can do both actually. I believe in planning for the future and preparing in both ages.*

*Again, some folks say, “That sounds like pie in the sky.” It is just plain Bible. Read Paul, John the apostle, Peter, Jesus; this thing was on their minds. They taught it. The Body of Christ needs to be equipped in this glorious, important subject.*

1. Different types of Eternal Rewards are given in varying measures
   1. There are different types of heavenly rewards that are spectacular and far more glorious than anyone has ever imagined (1 Cor. 2:9). Jesus highlighted 18 different rewards in Revelation 2-3.

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)

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

*Here I will just give you a minute or less on each one of seven different types of rewards. Jesus mentions eighteen different rewards in Revelation 2-3, so there are many more than seven. In Revelation 2-3, He mentions eighteen distinct ones. He gives them as simple, little phrases. Then you have to compare the Scripture with the Scripture to develop the thoughts in a greater way. As you compare Scripture with Scripture and just go an inch below the surface, there are a lot of implications that the Bible sheds on these phrases, these eighteen rewards that are just simple phrases. I would guess, though I have not counted, there are another ten or fifteen rewards in addition to those eighteen that Jesus mentioned. Jesus mentioned a few in the gospels He did not mention in the book of Revelation. Well, we are going to try to cover all of them and see what the Bible says to elaborate our understanding.*

*I want to quote 1 Corinthians 2:9. Here is what Paul said. Here is the grid through which we look at eternal rewards. 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul said, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it has never even entered in the imagination of man” the dimension of the glory that is coming. So that is the grid. That is premise number one: that you take Walt Disney plus Steven Spielberg plus the next ten guys, times a thousand, and these rewards are more spectacular than they could ever imagine. Paul said that it has never entered the heart of a man the spectacular dimension of the glory of God. So that is the grid we are going to use in looking at these. They are spectacular.*

*Then the second idea I put together with 1 Corinthians 2:9—the fact that it is more glorious than we have ever imagined—is the reality that Jesus is the designer and the architect of the New Jerusalem. So this Man who is fully God is the One who came up with the creative design of the New Jerusalem. I mean the streets are transparent gold, there are gardens, there are rivers, there is the tree of life. There is a spectacular dimension of glory. Jesus might say, “Let that be just a down payment. Everything I do has My personality and My creativity on it.”*

*So you read one of these rewards like one in Revelation 2:17, where it says, “I will give you a white stone.” Read one commentary, and he says, “Well, we get a little rock.”*

*I say, “I don’t think so!” I think this white stone is more spectacular than what has ever entered the mind of a man, this white stone, just like the garments you will have. We are designed by the Man who designed the New Jerusalem. His personality never changes. His creativity is vast. I mean look at the universe, the skies in the heavens. He might say, “Oh, I am more creative than you know! I have far more power than that. You are the ones I gave My life for.”*

*So beloved, whatever you do, do not dumb down those rewards to simple, little phrases and be content. I am saying, “Lord, Holy Spirit, show me the Word, and let my mind just understand a glimpse more of what this might be.” I love this subject!*

* 1. Some in the kingdom will be called least and some great (Mt. 5:19; Rev. 19:5). Every believer will differ from one another in the measure of God’s glory that they receive in the context of rewards.

19“Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments…shall be called least in the kingdom …but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom.” (Mt. 5:19)

41There is one glory of the sun…and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. 42So also is the resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:41-42)

*Jesus said in Matthew 5:19 that there will be some who will be called least in the kingdom and some will be called great in the kingdom. He is talking about in the millennial kingdom, the 1,000-year reign when Jesus returns. What I believe it means is that God will call some people’s life choices least and God will call some people’s life choices great. It is God who is calling them least and great. It is the saints that are recognized as least and great. I do not think anybody will be comparing anybody; we will all be so overwhelmed with gratitude and love. Nobody will be comparing, but there will be a large diversity and range of difference of people’s experience, even in the family of God and in the New Jerusalem.*

*Look at the next one, 1 Corinthians 15:41-42. It says, “There is one glory of the sun, there is another glory of the moon, and there is another glory of the stars. For one star differs from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection.” The whole realm of the resurrection has diversity of glory. No star is the same; there are billions and billions and billions of stars, an incalculable number in the universe, outside of the Milky Way Galaxy. They say the Milky Way Galaxy has 100 billion stars. The Milky Way Galaxy is only one of 100 billion galaxies in the known universe. Like what? I cannot even imagine that! And every star is unique in its characteristics, its mass, its glory, its brightness, many of its characteristics. Every single person in the New Jerusalem will be unique, like the stars in their glory.*

* 1. ***#1 Resurrected body***: God’s glory will be manifested in our resurrected bodies in varying measures.

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

*So I am giving you just these seven, and again I am going to be ever so brief on them, just to give you a snapshot of where this is going, because there are far more than seven. Jesus said in Matthew 13 that the righteous—their bodies—will shine, their faces will shine, some far greater than others. There are different capacities in every single believer, as one star differs from another star. This is a big subject; we will spend a good portion of time on this one. There is a lot of verses on this.*

* 1. ***#2 Garments***: Garments will vary in glory according to how believers lived (Rev. 3:4-5, 18; 19:8).   
     There may be many different types of clothing with unique designs, fabric, brightness, color, etc.

8To her [Bride of Christ] it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:8)

2And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. (Ex. 28:2)

*The garments. In Exodus 28:2, here is God speaking. God told Moses, “Hey Moses, make garments for the priesthood for glory and for beauty. Make them for glory and beauty.” The same God who told that to Moses is the God who created the New Jerusalem in splendor. Beloved, the garments are going to be glorious and beautiful and diverse beyond anything we could imagine. It has not entered the mind of man the fullness of it.*

*Some people, when they read about the white gown, they think they are going to have this one beautiful white gown for billions of years at every context they will ever be in. They have the white gown. You will be in thousands of different social and other contexts. There will be garments for every one of those. I believe they will be different and diverse in the fabric and the messaging and the glory and the splendor.*

*We look at how God told Moses to make garments for the priest as a little hint as to how that same God is making garments of glory and beauty for His priests in the age to come. Again, it is spectacular. Jesus’ personality is really big, He is really smart, and He is really creative. He has incredible wealth. There is no end to His resource. He loves beauty and splendor. So we all get the standard white garment to enter the city, but the saints will have other garments that are in accordance with their righteous choices in this age. Look at it, Revelation 19. They will have garments that will reflect the way they loved God in this age. A big subject.*

* 1. ***#3 Authority***: We will all have different work assignments with varying measures of authority and responsibility (Mt. 19:28, 30; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21).

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

*Authority. There are so many different levels of reigning and authority. You know in our nation alone, America— I just looked this up on the internet the other day—there are 22,000,000 people in America that are employed somewhere in the infrastructure of our government: federal, state, or local. 22,000,000. So do not think of several billion saints and all of them are kings. Beloved, there are only 200 nations and maybe there will be a few more in the age to come. I do not know. There are not a billion nations. A king is over a nation. In America alone there are 22,000,000 positions in the infrastructure, and that is all a part of ruling and reigning. Everybody will not be a king over a nation. There are not a couple billion nations. People will all be involved in various levels of spheres, just like in the whole infrastructure of a nation, a big subject.*

* 1. ***#4 Praise***: Each will receive varying praise from God (1 Cor. 4:5; cf. Mt. 25:21; 1 Pet. 1:7).

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

*I love this one. This is probably my favorite one. Then the Lord will praise each person. This word, praise, does not mean the Lord is going to worship them. He is going to* ***affirm*** *them. Beloved, we love to tell the story of people who live in heroic love and noble virtue. I have read biographies over the years. I read this biography of this guy or this gal. I think, “Whoa! Whew! Exciting!” I say to my friends, “Hey, I have to tell you about this guy.” Over the years in my messages, “Hey, I read about this one guy…” I love to tell the story of the person who lived in heroic, noble love. It moves me, and it moves people to hear it.*

*I love to tell the story of my friends and family members, to speak about them to other people when they do things that are really special. Like, I don’t want to mention that my granddaughter got the Christ-like award at her school. I am not going to mention that, but she did, in her class. I went all strutting around, and my wife said, “Oh calm down! It is not you.” I slipped it into a couple conversations. I was so excited that Shiloh got the Christ-like award. We love to tell the story. It moves us to tell it. It moves the people that hear it. I have a lot of home videos I could show you guys, too!*

*It moves the person the story is about. The Lord would say, “I love to tell the story. I do not want to tell it once on your entry day. I want to tell the whole story of your love for Me. There are many facets, many different angles. I am going to tell the story about how I feel about the way you love Me. It is a big story, a big subject.” We all will not have the same report and the same story.*

* 1. ***#5 Crowns***: Some will receive crowns (Rev. 2:10; cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; Jas. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:11). Receiving a crown is not synonymous with the gift of eternal life that is freely given to all believers.

10…Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)

*Crowns are a big topic and not synonymous with eternal life. The gift of eternal life and receiving a crown are not synonymous.*

* 1. ***#6 Treasures***: Jesus’ call to gain treasure in heaven includes many different things (Mt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18, 20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 19:21; Mk. 9:41; 10:21; Lk. 6:23, 35; 12:21, 33; 18:22; Rev. 3:18; 22:12).

*Treasures. There are many verses on this. The most wealthy man that has ever lived—Jesus, fully God, fully Man—tells us to get treasure. He would say, “I really know what I am talking about, and I will tell you how to get it. You get it by obeying, by diligence, by humility, by generosity, by acting in purity. It does not matter how many people recognize it. If I recognize it, it is written in My book, and that is what matters.”*

* 1. ***#7 Communion***: Our communion with God will vary according to our spiritual capacity. Jesus will reward some by writing the Father’s name on them, which includes receiving insight about God.

*Then, number seven, our communion with God. Just like in this age everyone in this room has a different capacity of communing with God right now, the same will be true in the resurrection. There will be some who will have far greater understanding than others.*

*I have found through the years that I know a lot more now about the Lord. I have had a lot more encounters by my sixties, when I look back over forty-plus years, than by my twenties. When I was in my twenties, man, I thought it was happening! I didn’t even know what I did not know and what I did not feel. So I was not walking around at age twenty saying, “Oh, I am so sad that I don’t have now what I will have when I am sixty!” I did not think about it. I think people will be happy and content at different capacities because they will not even know what they do not know and feel, compared to the different capacities, just like today believers are like that. There is quite a bit on this as well.*

*Well, I am going to end with that. Big topic. I am really excited about this. Again, my goal is not to get everybody to come to the meeting. My goal is to get you to access the web stream and the archives over the next weeks and months to check out this subject for your own edification and your own good. I want to get this into our language. Many godly believers never talk about this subject. Paul and James and Peter did. It is in their writings. I want to see this biblical reality in our words, in our language, in our thought processes.*

*Amen, let’s stand before the Lord.*

*Now some of you are really excited right now. You are thinking, “Ooh, yes!”*

*Others of you are thinking, “Oh my gosh, I got to get with it! Oh my goodness, this is not going away on its own. Oh, no!” Beloved, it is not too late to start going hard right now. I am telling you. You may say, “Oh man, it is already too late.” No, it is not. That is a lie. Go, start now. It is humility. It is purity. It is generosity. It is faithfulness. It is servanthood. It is those things that anybody can do.*

*The third category, some people are perplexed. They are thinking, “I don’t even get any of this. He seems really excited about it. Maybe I need to figure this out.”*

*My prayer for those who are excited is that you follow through. For those who are feeling troubled, it is that you start anew today. For those that are perplexed, that you say, “Lord, I want to search this out and find out if this is really in the Bible.”*

*Father, I ask You, even right now, that You would touch us, that You would stir us as a community. Lord, that we would see what You see and say what You say about this subject. I ask You that as a community we would see what You see and say what You say about this subject. Thank You, Jesus, for the bema seat and for the great rewards for the simplest cup of cold water that we give in Your name.*

*I want to invite people to come up for prayer. You might have a need for healing in your body or your heart. Maybe you are touched by this message in a certain way and you would just like someone to pray with you. Or you have a family situation you want prayer for. I want to invite anybody just to come on up to this front line here if you would like prayer. We will have our ministry team come on up as well. Just come on up to the front row so the folks behind you can have room.*

*Ministry team, come on up. Anybody in leadership, I am urging anybody on the mission base or anyone in our FCF leadership team at any level, I am asking you to come and join us, to come and join the ministry team. I am always asking for you to come and help us.*

*The Lord would say it is not too late, it is not too late to start. Push delete on yesterday, start anew today, a new zeal, a new faithfulness. Beautiful God! Beloved, it is worth it to live in the light of this. Holy Spirit, we invite Your presence, Your manifest glory.*

*I am asking more to join us in prayer, anyone who is a part of our leadership team. Anyone on the base, I am asking you to come and help.*

*I want to remind you of our Global Bridegroom Fast. It is a good time to really be in the presence of the Lord together.*

*Lord, I ask You to release Your healing and Your renewing power in Jesus’ name. Come like a wind, Lord, like a wave of Your Spirit in this room. Release the wind of Your Spirit in our hearts today.*

*Beloved, it is going to be worth it. In all that we pour out I tell you it is going to be worth it. Paul said, the surpassing greatness of glory.*

*Father, renew us, cleanse us, strengthen us with the truth. Come and wash us with Your truth. We want to be Yours with all of our hearts, with all of our strength, with all of our mind.*

*It is going to be worth it.*