

“ The REWARD of the Saved? ”

To Those within the Embrace of Orthodox ‘Grace Theology’, the Indication of a Personal Reward associated with Salvation seems oddly Out of Place. What Reward should Christians anticipate receiving at the Second Coming?

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“For by Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **Not of works, lest any man should boast.**”¹ This being the case, why would anyone consider or suggest that there is any ‘reward’ associated with the Christian experience? (Reward indicates something was earned.) This verse from Galatians 2 seems clear enough in itself. And, except for other equally clear scriptures, this would put the subject to rest. But, you see, in Revelation 22: the concluding chapter of the Bible, in verse 12, it says, “Behold, I come quickly; and my **reward** is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Earlier, in announcing that same event, in which He returning, will assume full power over all the earth, it says, “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give **reward** unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name small and great;...”

This places more than one very profound question before each believer. If salvation is a gift of grace, and in no way earnable, then what is this reward? Use of a word like ‘reward’ suggests something clearly merited! To further tip this applear, we find that reward, in verse 22:12, (the concluding chapter) to be predicated upon ones’ **works!**

But there’s another consideration this scripture raises. If Heaven is the true and full reward of the saved, why does this passage indicate that there’s a reward awaiting these servants, the prophets and saints, which is to be given out only when Christ returns, after the time of the first resurrection?

Salvation is clearly of and by grace, not of works, yet we see there is a **reward**, given to God’s Saints at the time of His second coming, awarded, based

upon each individual’s works! What is it that we are to understand from these passages? Clearly then, salvation itself is presented as distinct from this reward being talked about. Salvation isn’t that reward! It is something in addition to salvation, and it is awarded later, only at Christ’s return, not before.

This, clearly, is at serious odds with the cherished views of traditional Christianity. Not only as it involves the idea of being accepted into Heaven, eternally, at the moment of one’s death; not only that this ‘reward’ is awarded at and after Christ’s Second Coming to earth to judge the resurrected and to rule over the nations for at least a millennium; but also in the fact that this ‘reward’ is not meted out equally among all His Saints, but is given in proportion to their varying individual **WORKS!** To many, this idea is an anomaly!

Salvation itself is a relative constant. Being resurrected is another. So, this ‘reward’ and it being meted out in accordance with the individual’s ‘works’, we clearly must be looking at something other than these! There’s a greater or lesser award in proportion to the individuals unique accomplishment level, not what Christ did for us, (which is applied unilaterally and equally), but what **we** do in response to what He did for us!

To BE With the Lord

For this to actually be true, it means there are obvious problems with modern Christian theology. Those problems center around a fundamental premise, one which has very little actual Biblical foundation: that of Christians (of all persuasions, apparently) being taken to Heaven at death, where they reportedly are to spend all eternity. On the other hand, there is ample Biblical mention of Christ returning to Earth, to rule and judge all

¹ Ephesians 2:8-9

nations, co-involving His Saints! How do we square that with the typical ‘accepted’ view? The obvious exclusive character of these contrasting scenarios causes modern theologians to reject the millennial Kingdom of God on Earth. With it, they are compelled also to reject the resurrections from the dead, ² that fundamental doctrine having no accommodation with their preferred story line.

Who can adequately explain a need for a resurrection to life, let alone there being more than one resurrection? Who can explain why there is to be a thousand years between the ‘first resurrection’ and the next?! (Rev.20:5)

If one ‘goes to be with the Lord’ at death, as most believe, then where will they be when He is returned to Earth for a thousand years, at least? ³ Either the Saints are **not** to remain in Heaven for all eternity, or else they must remain ‘separated’ from the Lord for the time He is here on Earth! Do our esteemed theologians dare present this question to their congregations, and will they (can they?) provide a logical answer? It can’t be both ways!

To further confound accepted theology, we see the Saints rising up to meet the returning Christ in the air, as He’s coming toward Earth, in 1st Thessalonians 4:15-17. Why would the ‘dead in Christ’ need to be raised? (Paul says this **MUST** happen **first!**) Does this meeting include those raised, or does that apply only to those changed in that instant referred to in 1st Corinthians 15:52? If their ‘meeting’ occurred at the time of their deaths, why is *their* being raised a pre-requisite to our meeting Him in the air? Verse 53 raises a question of its own: Can the dead be received into the presence of the Lord without first having received their ‘spiritual body’? “*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*”. Christianity puts forth a scenario that effectively says, **Yes!** Having received that body is un-necessary! But, IF the answer truly is ‘yes’, then why must we first ‘**put on**’ immortality? (Wait a minute, Aren’t we born with that?)

This brings us back to the question posed earlier.

² Hebrews 6:1-2

³ Zech. 8:3 & 22, 14:4, Dan. 7:27, Rev. 5:8-10, 20:4-6 & 21:2, etc.

Why is there any need for a resurrection? Though most Christian religions acknowledge at least one, and many recognize two, (They should, (see Revelation 20:5)) it remains a mystery to many why such a thing is necessary. After all, hasn’t our dear departed loved one ‘gone to be with the Lord’? (His or her soul, at least.) Here, having lost life and body, only that cognizant remnant remains to constitute their continuing existence. The SOUL, as it’s commonly called, goes to be with the Lord and remains ever conscious. The dear departed lost two-thirds of his existence, gaining nothing new at this point, as that new spiritual body is not received until the moment of the Last Trump! So, why does Paul say that “...*this mortal **must** put on immortality*”...and only then is “*Death swallowed up in victory*”! Why **MUST** we?

Not to be ‘Unclothed’

In 2nd Corinthians 5:2, Paul suggests that we must first be ‘*clothed upon*’ with that body which is from heaven. In order to be ‘*present with the Lord*’, We must first appear before the judgment seat of Christ, (v.10) then we may receive the things done in our bodies. Yet, in 1st Corinthians 15: we see the resurrected saints invested with their ‘spiritual bodies’ at the Last Trumpet, at Christ’s return to Earth! Here’s the ‘interesting’ part: If those Saints went to Heaven, why do they need to have their old physical bodies, still back on earth, raised in order to receive their new spiritual body. Or, why would their new bodies from heaven first appear out from their earthly gravesite? Why wouldn’t they have already ‘received’ it while they were up there where it came from?

Get the point? Modern ‘christian’ religions are woefully under-informed in some pretty important areas. There is no real place in their theology for the resurrections from the dead, nor do they accommodate Christ’s thousand year Millennial Kingdom on Earth, co-ruled by God’s Spirit-Born ever-living Saints. This is partly why there is no effective cognizance of this ‘reward’ issue.

(IF there were no resurrection from the dead, would it void the basis of beliefs of most of what is regarded as Christianity? ⁴ If everyone who’s

⁴ Paul seems to say it would: 1st Cor. 15:14, (Rom. 5:10)

going to heaven goes there and if everyone who is going to that other place goes there, and then if no resurrection ever occurs, what real difference would it make, as people understand it?)

Saints Rule under Christ

When we allow our theology to accommodate the clear scriptures, those that show that Christ and His true Saints are to co-rule all nations, in their resurrected state, then this matter of a ‘reward’ becomes eminently logical. There is more offered than just ‘salvation’ by itself. There is an ever increasing government. (Isa. 9:6-7) Those Saints who ‘overcome’, will participate in varying positions within that government. *“And he that overcomes, and keeps my works⁵ unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.”* (Re.2:26) *“To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.”* To His Disciples, He said, *“...you which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His Glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* (Matt. 19:28) Notice, Christ explains that there would be a regeneration (their being brought back to life), as precondition, after which they should expect to be installed into positions of rulership.

Daniel words it well, in his Chapter 7. *“I beheld till the thrones (of this world) were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit...millions ministered unto Him, and 100 millions stood before Him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. But the Saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”* (vs. 10 & 18) *“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an*

⁵ We don’t need to guess what “keep my works” means. Revelation 12:17 says, *“...the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Notice the Old Testament and New Testament components in His description of His Saints! 14:12 has, *Here is the patience of the Saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”* These same components again! 19:10 makes clear that the ‘testimony of Jesus’ is the spirit of prophecy. The one who keeps His works is a spirit-filled commandmentkeeper!

everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” (v. 27) Could it be clearer?

A more general picture is given in Daniel 2:44. *“And in the days of these (latter day) kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom,...and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”*

Early in the Book of Revelation, golden vials are poured-out, which are the prayers of the Saints. Those prayers are, *“You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and has redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* (5:9-10)

If it isn’t well stated enough, Revelation 21 confirms what many Old Testament prophecies say, that God (first Christ, and after the days of salvation end and the judgment is complete, the Father also) will descend to the earth and dwell with men! *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; ...And I John saw the Holy City new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven...And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.”*

The throne of Christ and ultimately God is to be relocated to Earth! That’s very Biblical! Those expecting to spend eternity in heaven need to think about this! *“Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. (That last enemy being death)... And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”* (1st Cor. 15:24-28)

In this context, the idea of reward being given to God’s Spirit-Born Saints makes a lot more sense. Under the ‘spending eternity in heaven’ context, we can articulate some pretty formidable problems.

Though our eminent preachers do a fabulous job presenting what they envision an eternal heavenly experience to be like, (without substantial or clear scriptures on the subject), it leaves many wondering what will the Saints **do** there for all eternity?

Now, some traditionally hold that heaven itself is the reward of the saved. But, reward implies merit. Our having earned something. That, and the fact that the resurrection has to happen first, before anyone is to be awarded this 'reward' is direct proof that heaven is not it!

Revelation 11 gives an explicit time-line of events leading up to the assignment of God's Reward. Verses 15 thru 18, which enumerate the events occurring within the seventh (last) trump. Christ returns, He assumes power over all nations, the nations react negatively, He deals with those who oppose Him, and the resurrection occurs for the purpose of "... *giving **reward** unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name small and great;...*" This Trump is the same one Paul refers to in 1st Corinthians 15:50-52. The seventh trump is the 'Last Trump'. "*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*" The mystery he refers to is the fact that there will be those alive at this event, who will have bypassed the 'experience' of death, being translated directly into that incorruptible state. But the notable thing also revealed here, is that the dead are raised incorruptible at this same moment in time also. Now, does that mean that they've been waiting in heaven all these years, corruptible? These deceased don't receive their incorruptible form until this Last Trumpet!

The statement, "*neither does corruption inherit incorruption*" is revealing in itself. The word inherit is not a word indicating merit! Inheritance comes to us by occasion of birth. It is awarded on account of parental grace as is being named in a will. So a resurrection to life and the receipt of our incorruptible body form isn't that reward either!

Paul's comment in 1st Thessalonians 4:13-17 sheds more light on this subject. "*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep.* ⁶ *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" (Here, as in the previous quote, Paul refers to the dead in Christ as being 'asleep'! Doesn't he know they're 'awake' in heaven?)

Awarded at the Last

So, clearly we can see that this reward is something in addition to salvation. It's not heaven, it's not the resurrection itself, nor is it anything provided to us under the auspices of grace. It has to be something merited! Something awarded 'according to our works'! It is not received until Christ's return, at and with the Last Trump of God.

We have seen those doctrines that obscure things we need to know: the resurrections from the dead and a millennial kingdom of God, with its positions of leadership, awarded to the overcomers. Those doctrines are found wanting in the clear light of scripture. We can't begin to correctly understand this matter of our reward under that perceptually deficient theology!

There is in fact a reward, which Christ will bring at His return. "*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" (Rev, 22:12) It is awarded at the time of the first resurrection and it includes the positions of responsibility we will be awarded in Christ's administration on earth! "*To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.*" (Revelation 3:21)

Work for it! Be an Overcomer!!

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⁶ If Paul had thought that his readers thought that the dead had gone to be with the Lord already, at death, then why would he see it necessary to clarify that WE won't go to be with the Lord before them? Think about it.