

## Tribunal of Christ (Bema Seat) (*Rewards / Loss of Rewards Ceremony for Believers*)

The Tribunal of Christ has **nothing to do with salvation, nor with punishment** - that was all taken care of **at the cross**. Nor does it have to do with what **I** as a Christian can do **for** God. God does not need anything I can do. Rewards will be based on the **fruit that I have allowed the Holy Spirit to produce** through my life here on earth, as I by **faith** in His promises, have abided in fellowship with Him. I **cannot compare** heavenly rewards with earthly rewards, but I need to understand that they will somehow affect the **quality** of my life in eternity. A Christian should not conclude that the Rewards Ceremony is unimportant because there is no associated punishment. If God says it's important, it is!

1. Every Christian is going to appear at the Tribunal of Christ.

Rom. 14:10-12 But you, why do you criticize your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we will **all** stand before the tribunal of God. For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to Me, and every tongue will give praise to God. So then, **each** of us **will give an account of himself to God**.

2 Cor. 5:9-10 (*Paul wrote*) Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. For we must **all** appear before the tribunal of Christ, so that **each** may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless.

2 Tim. 4:7-8 (*Paul wrote*) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is reserved for me in the future the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but **to all those who have loved His appearing**.

Rev. 22:12 (*Jesus said*) "Look! I am coming quickly, and **My reward** is with Me **to repay each person** according to what he has done."

2. What will be the nature of the Tribunal of Christ?

1 Cor. 3:8-15 (*Paul wrote*) Now the one planting and the one watering are one in purpose, and **each will receive his own reward according to his own labor**.... I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But **each one must be careful how he builds on it**. For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on that foundation with **gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw**, each one's work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive **a reward**. If anyone's work is burned up, it will **be lost**, [see note below] **but he will be saved**; yet it will be like an escape through fire.

1 Cor. 4:5 ... before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts. And then **praise will come to each one from God**.

(NOTE: "loss" refers to the forfeiture of God's intended rewards for the believer.)

3. When will the Tribunal of Christ take place?

Matt. 16:27 (*Jesus said*) “For **the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then** He will reward each according to what he has done.”  
Luke 14:13-14 (*Jesus said*) “On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid **at the resurrection of the righteous.**”  
1 Peter 5:1-4 (*Peter wrote*) ... I exhort the elders ... Shepherd God’s flock ... And **when the chief Shepherd appears**, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.  
Rev. 11:18 The nations were angry, but Your wrath has come. The **time has come** for the dead to be judged and **to give the reward** to Your servants the prophets, to the saints, and to those who fear Your name,...

4. There will be no punishment for a believer.

John 5:24 “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and **will not come under judgment** but has passed from death to life.”  
Rom. 4:8 How joyful is the man the Lord **will never charge** with sin!  
Rom. 8:1 Therefore, **no condemnation now exists** for those in Christ Jesus.  
Heb. 10:14 For by one offering He has **perfected forever** those who are sanctified.  
Heb. 10:17-18 He adds: **I will never again remember** their sins and their lawless acts....  
Rev. 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will no longer exist; **grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer**, because the previous things have passed away.

5. But each one needs to be aware of the potential for “loss” of rewards. Loss is not punishment. (See also Lesson 3-14, pages 202-214)

John 15:16 (*Jesus said*) “I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should **remain**,...”  
1 Cor. 3:14-15 ... If anyone’s work is burned up, **it will be lost**, but he will be saved;...  
1 Cor. 9:24-27 Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? **Run in such a way to win** the prize. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away. Therefore I do not run like one who runs **aimlessly** or box like one beating the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be **disqualified**.  
Gal. 6:9 So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time **if we don’t give up**.  
2 Tim. 2:5 Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned **unless he competes according to the rules**.  
2 John 1:8 **Watch** yourselves **so you don’t lose** what we have worked for, but that you may receive a **full** reward.  
Rev. 3:11-12 (*Jesus said*) “I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have, **so that no one takes your crown**....”

6. For what will believers be rewarded? These are but a sampling of fruit that we should expect to see, as the Holy Spirit is allowed to work.

1 Sam. 26:23 May the LORD repay every man for his **righteousness** and his **loyalty**....

Prov. 19:17 **Kindness to the poor** is a loan to the LORD, and He will give a reward to the lender.

Matt. 5:11-12 “You are blessed **when they insult and persecute you** and falsely say every kind of evil against you **because of Me**. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven....”

Matt. 5:44-46 (*Jesus said*) “But I tell you, **love your enemies** and **pray for those** who persecute you, ... For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same?”

Luke 6:35 “But **love your enemies, do what is good,** and **lend, expecting nothing in return.** Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is gracious to the ungrateful and evil.”

Matt. 10:42 “And **whoever gives just a cup of cold water** to one of these little ones **because he is a disciple**—I assure you: He will never lose his reward!”

Matt. 19:27-30 Then Peter responded to Him, “Look, we have left everything and followed You. So what will there be for us?” Jesus said to them, ... “And **everyone who has left houses, brothers or sisters, father or mother, children, or fields because of My name** will receive 100 times more and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Rom. 8:17-18 ... heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—seeing that **we suffer with Him** so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

Eph. 6:5-8 Slaves [**employees?**], **obey** your human masters with fear and trembling, in the **sincerity** of your heart, as to Christ. Don’t work only while being watched, in order to please men, but **as slaves of Christ**, do God’s will **from your heart**. Serve with a good attitude, **as to the Lord** and not to men, knowing that **whatever good** each one does, slave or free, he will receive this back from the Lord.

Col. 3:22-24 Slaves [**employees?**], **obey** your human masters in everything. Don’t work only while being watched, in order to please men, but work **wholeheartedly**, fearing the Lord. **Whatever** you do, do it **enthusiastically**, as something done **for the Lord** and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You **serve** the Lord Christ.

Phil. 4:1 (*Paul wrote*) So then, my **brothers**, you are dearly loved and longed for—**my** joy and **crown**. In this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

1 Thess. 2:19-20 For who is **our** hope or joy or **crown of boasting** in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? Is it not **you**? For **you** are our glory and joy!

James 1:12 A man who **endures trials** is blessed, because when he passes the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

Rev. 2:10 Don’t be afraid of what you are about to **suffer**. Look, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison **to test you**, and you will have **affliction** for 10 days. Be **faithful** until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

*“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matthew 6:20)  
- is not a “suggestion.”

7. We should seek “eternal” rewards, not rewards of an “earthly” nature.

Matt. 6:1-6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness **in front of people, to be seen by them**. Otherwise, you will have **no reward** from your Father in heaven. ... But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be **in secret**. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners **to be seen by people**. I assure you: **They’ve got their reward!** But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is **in secret**. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Matt. 6:16-21 ... “Don’t collect for yourselves treasures **on earth**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But collect for yourselves treasures **in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For **where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**”

Luke 14:12-14 ... “When you give a lunch or a dinner, don’t invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and **you would be repaid**. On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for **you will be repaid** at the resurrection of the righteous.”

John 5:44 How can you believe? While **accepting glory from one another**, you don’t seek the glory that comes **from the only God**.

John 12:42-43 Nevertheless, many did believe in Him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so they would not be banned from the synagogue. For **they loved praise from men more than praise from God**.

2 Cor. 4:17-18 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an **absolutely incomparable eternal** weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is **unseen**. For what is seen is **temporary**, but what is unseen is eternal.

Phil. 3:7-16 ... I also **consider everything to be a loss** in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and **consider them filth**, ... Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal **the prize promised by God’s heavenly call** in Christ Jesus. Therefore, **all** who are mature **should think this way....**

Col. 3:1-3 So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is **above**, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth....**

1 Tim. 4:8 for the training of the body has a limited benefit, but **godliness** is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for **the present life** and also for **the life to come**.

1 Tim. 6:17-19 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on **the uncertainty of wealth**, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, willing to share, storing up for themselves **a good reserve for the age to come**, so that they may take hold of **life that is real**.

1 Peter 1:17 And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one’s work, you are to conduct yourselves in fear during the time of **your temporary residence**.

*“for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)*

8. His rewards are eternal (forever.) (Note: Daniel references may refer just to Old Testament saints.)

Dan. 7:18 ... the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it **forever** ...

Dan. 7:27 'The kingdom, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the people, the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom will be an **everlasting** kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey Him.'

1 Cor. 9:24-27 ... Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that **will never fade away**.

2 Cor. 4:17-18 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable **eternal** weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is **eternal**.

1 Pet. 1:3-7 Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is **imperishable**, uncorrupted, and **unfading**, kept in heaven for you. You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials so that the genuineness of your faith —**more valuable than gold**, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in **praise, glory, and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

9. Although much religious activity appears spiritual, only that which is motivated by the Holy Spirit will be rewarded. (the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal. 5:22-23)

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that **all God does will last forever**; there is no adding to it or taking from it...

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because **you can do nothing without Me**."

1 Cor. 13:1-3 If I speak human or angelic languages but do not have love, I am **a sounding gong** or **a clanging cymbal**. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am **nothing**. And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body in order to boast but do not have love, **I gain nothing**.

Gal. 6:7-10 Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, because the one who sows **to his flesh** will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows **to the Spirit** will reap eternal life...

1 John 4:16-17 ... God is love, and the one who **remains** in love remains in God, and God **remains** in him. In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, for we are as He is in this world.

(NOTE: "**nothing**" refers to that which does **not** have eternal value as determined by God.)

10. Old Testament believers will also be rewarded.

**Hebrews 11**

- :1-2 Now **faith** is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. For our ancestors won God's approval **by it**.
- :8-11 By **faith** Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he was going. By **faith** he stayed as a **foreigner** in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, coheirs of the same promise. For **he was looking forward to the city that has foundations**, whose architect and builder is God. By **faith** even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since **she considered** that **the One** who had promised was **faithful**.
- :13-16 These all died **in faith without having received** the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were **foreigners** and **temporary residents** on the earth. Now those who say such things **make it clear that they are seeking a homeland**. If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return. But they now desire a better place—**a heavenly one**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for **He has prepared a city** for them.
- :24-27 By **faith** Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. For he considered the reproach because of the Messiah to be **greater wealth** than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on **the reward**. By **faith** he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for Moses persevered as one who **sees Him** who is invisible.
- :32-40 ... Women received their dead—they were raised to life again. Some men were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a **better** resurrection, and others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. ... All these were approved through their **faith**, but **they did not receive** what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, **so that they would not be made perfect without us**.

*Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.* Hebrews 11:6

- We each have three resources: **Time, Energy, and Possessions**.
- As I allow the Holy Spirit freedom to manage and use my resources, He is building for me eternal rewards, using gold, silver and precious stones.
- As I deny the Holy Spirit use of my resources, I am using those resources to build for myself a temporary investment of wood, hay and straw.

