

Eternal Rewards

Every believer shall appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ or Bema, (which means evaluation) for the judgment of his works (Rom. 14:12, 2 Cor. 5:10). This must be kept distinct in our thinking from judgment for sin because as far as the believer is concerned, all sins are past (Romans 5:1). Salvation is a gift (Eph. 2:8-9) while rewards are earned (1 Cor. 3:14). Rewards are the result of human efforts and the exercise of free will to stay and function inside the will and plan of God.

At the Bema you will be on your own facing the Lord of Glory. Christ will handle each case separately. The issue is not sin but your mental attitude towards the Bible doctrine. There will be no excuse or alibi because Christ Himself has provided every believer the means for overcoming every barrier in life even legitimate excuses.

By the time you reach the Bema, (as soon as you die), it will be too late to do anything about your evaluation. Your efficiency report will cover the period of time between your salvation and your departure from the earth. Now is the time to learn Bible doctrine.

At the Bema, only the believers who received the blessings in time will receive their eternal rewards. Those who did not grow up spiritually and who did not allow God to bless them (with the blessings in time) will receive a very simple evaluation: worthless. The other efficiency evaluation will be: well done, good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21).

The blessings that were imputed to God's righteousness in time will be converted into fantastic blessings and rewards that will glorify Christ in eternity. The blessings in time are designed to provide the believer eternal blessings.

The criterion for the eternal rewards will not be what you have produced but your attitude toward Bible doctrine. So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty (the Bible doctrine when taught).

For judgment (the evaluation at Bema) will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy (those who failed to receive blessings in time from God); mercy (blessing in time) triumphs over judgment (James 2:12-13)

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty (the bible doctrine), and abides (progressed in all stages of spiritual growth) by it, not having become forgetful hearer but an effectual doer (one who advance to spiritual maturity), this man shall be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25)

Confident anticipation of blessings in time will encourage the believer to fulfill the plan of God, reach spiritual maturity and obtain genuine happiness in the process (James 2:12-13). Legitimate and properly motivated production is the result of a mental attitude renewed by Bible doctrine, oriented to grace, and occupied with Christ. The perfect Judge will reward the cause, not the results.

All human good work (done in the power of the old sinful nature) is rejected at the Bema. No production of the OSN will escape judgment. Personal sins were judged at the Cross, and human good and evil are judged at the Bema, which will be burned like wood, hay and stubble (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

Any attempt to earn, deserve, or work for blessing from God is human good, and totally destroyed in eternity. Loss of rewards does not imply loss of salvation (2 Timothy 2:11-13) our salvation is permanent and an eternal imputation.

There will be wide variations in the eternal rewards and blessings imputed to believers at the Bema (Mark 4:3-21) based on their response to doctrine. The Lord Jesus Christ used bumper crops and cities analogies to illustrate the great and marvelous blessings of eternity.

The cities symbolizes authority, power and wealth for the leaders (Luke 19:17, Hebrews 11:16, 16, 13:14). Abraham anticipated his heavenly cities and rejected the power and glory that the world was offering him. He considered the things with eternal repercussions than the temporal glory of the cosmic system.

The apostle Paul used the analogy of military decoration. In the ancient world a crown is a headdress worn to signify honor, victory, authority or official standing.

There were four crowns in the Old Testament:

- The High priest's gold plated crown (Exodus 29:6, 39:30)
- Hebrew King wore a narrow band of silk studded with jewels (2 Samuel 1:10)
- Pagan kings wore massive crowns of gold with jewels (2 Samuel 12:30, Esther 1:11)
- Wreath of flowers (Isaiah 28:1)

In the New Testament, there are two words for crown:

- Stephanos is a chaplet or circlet, or wreath worn at banquets given as civic or military honor. It does indicate human royalty.
- Diadema is the royalty crown, it is very rare, and only the beast from the sea (Rev. 12:3, 13:1) and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:12) will be wearing it. No believer is going to wear diadema in heaven.

During the time of Apostle Paul, there were several grades of wreaths worn by the Roman heroes as a symbol of personal valor and the glory of SPQR. Lesser awards were worn lower such as medallions suspended from the neck, brass or silver bands around the arm, medals sewn into leather across the chest.

There were six categories of wreath awarded by the SPQR:

- Corona obsidionalis made of golden strands of grass was the highest of all or the corona graminea awarded for rare deeds of supreme valor.
- Corona civica made of gold oak leaves
- Corona navalis the highest honor in the Roman navy
- Corona muralis for the Roman army
- Corona castrensis for the Roman marine
- Corona triumphalis awarded to any army commanders after a victorious campaign.

Paul borrowed these concepts from the SPQR and outlined a system of Christian wreaths, to be awarded in the future by the Lord Jesus Christ. Wreaths were highly coveted and held in awe (2 Timothy 4:7-8, James 1:12, Rev. 2:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, Phil. 4:-3, 1 Peter 5:4).

Military heroes who wore stephanos were awarded with big amounts of money, lifetime pension, and vast piece of land. Paul used also the analogy of athletic wreaths. There were two types of players during his time:

- Agonistes who lived outside and visited the gym occasionally, often an idler and built muscles for personal profile.
- Athletes who lived in the gym, followed strict routine, discipline and diet, observed rules and were under rigid training.

The agonistes visited the gym for some workout to stay in shape or whenever he was out of shape. He is like negative volition believers who come to church just to pick up something. He comes to gym to talk to newcomers about his skills and knowledge of body building, he is just an idler building the wrong muscles.

The agonistes cannot win any game; he has no resistance, no patience, no proper training. The agonistes are like Christians who are building the wrong spiritual muscles of human good works.

The athletes trained under a gym governor called gymnastarches who was an honored or decorated retired military general. The training was under the rules (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The athletes trained long before any game, regardless of the weather. He is separated from his family in order to concentrate for the training.

The winning athletes were welcomed by the whole province in great splendor and public appreciation. The winner athletes were given a big cash reward, a lifetime pass to the games, a poet lauded him in an ode, a sculptor was commissioned to erect statue of him in his hometown, his children were fed and educated at the public expense and he was exempted for life from all income taxes.

The eternal rewards are waiting for you, but it can be lost by your failure to grow and mature spiritually. Spiritual maturity guarantees spiritual blessings in time and eternal rewards in heaven. The decision is yours.

The following rewards are the believer's escrow blessings for eternity and they will be presented by the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation:

- Crown of righteousness (Tes dikaosunes stephanos): For the believer who executes the plan of God for the church age. It represents a tremendous amount of privileges, blessings and opportunities in the eternal state. (2 Tim. 4:7-8).
- Crown of life (Ton stephano tes zoes): For the believer who attains spiritual maturity. It is awarded to the believer who passes Evidence Testing resulting in the maximum glorification of God in the Angelic Conflict. (Rev. 2:10).
- Incorruptible crown of glory (Ton amarntinon tes doxes stephanon): For the Pastor-Teacher who was faithful in communicating the mystery doctrine for the church age. (1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 4:1).
- Order of the morning star: The believer is provided a translucent uniform of glory over the resurrection body (Rev. 3:4)
- Crown of rejoicing stephanos kaucheseos: For the Soul winners crown. (1 Thess. 2:19-20)

The winner believer will receive a New Knighthood (Rev. 2:17). He will also receive a New Title in the Lamb's book of life and will have a membership to the Paradise Club and access to the Gazebo in the Garden (Rev. 2:7, 14). The winner believer will have his name recorded in the historical record section of heaven (Rev. 3:12). The "hidden manna" in Revelation 2:17 refers to the special intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity and will be given only to the overcomer or winner believer.



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