

Christ in Prophecy
Conference 48: Meredith on Heavenly Rewards

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: What kind of rewards will believers receive at the judgment seat of Jesus? And will they be rewards to be enjoyed eternally? Also, is it improper for Christians to be motivated by the promise of rewards? For the answers to these and other questions regarding our heavenly rewards, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Each year our ministry sponsors a Bible conference that is held in the Dallas, Texas area in mid-July. In 2017 our conference theme was "Living with Hope in the End Times." In this program I'm going to share with you a portion of one of the powerful presentations that was made at that conference, one that concerned what the Bible has to say about the rewards that Jesus will hand out when we stand before His judgment seat. The presentation was made by Glenn Meredith, the pastor of the Brookhaven Church in McKinney, Texas. Here, now, is Pastor Meredith.

Glenn Meredith's Presentation

Glenn Meredith: But I've got to be honest with you from the early part of my life I wasn't real excited about the return of Jesus. I could remember sitting in a revival meeting one time when I was a teenager, and the evangelist actually stood up and he said that when Jesus comes He's going to catch away His bride, and we are going to stand there before the judgment seat of Christ. And then your life will be flashed like a giant movie screen and all the sins that you have ever committed will all be put up there on the screen for all to know. And so I got to tell you I wasn't really looking forward to that. There's an awful lot of believers who think that's what is coming. But I have got great news for your today that is not what the Bible teaches.

And so if you have your Bible and you want to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 you can do so, or you can look on the screen. I'd like us to begin with a passage that we are all familiar with as we talk today about the promise of rewards. We have an awful lot to look forward to. And the whole jest of the message can be summed up in this: it is that what you do now in your life, what you do for Jesus now is going to have a dramatic impact on your eternity. Now it is more than just going to Heaven, but how you live for Christ. How you served other people in the name of Christ. How you take the kingdom of Christ and you seek to move it forward by sharing the Gospel, by funding ministries that do. All the things that you do for Christ are going to have a profound impact on what you have, and what you do for all of eternity.

Now in 2 Corinthians 5:10 the Apostle Paul says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, the Bema, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body whether good or bad." Now all my life I saw that passage and I would go, ok, I'm going to stand before Jesus, the judgment seat, and He is going to talk to me about all the good things that I've done, but also all the bad or sinful things that I've done. And I thought the judgment seat of Christ was going to be a time when I would have to give an account for my sin. But I've got great news for you that is not what this passage is teaching. There are several words in the New Testament in the original language of the New Testament was written in that can be translated bad, a couple of them mean evil, morally bad, something that is sinful or wicked, or it's iniquity, its evil. But the word that is used here is a different word, the primary meaning of the word that is translated bad in this passage is something that doesn't mean morally evil, it means worthless. It would be like if we said, boy that piece of fruit that I bought is bad. What do we mean by that? We don't mean it's morally evil. We don't mean that it is sinful, we mean that it's no good, it has no value, it's worthless and we don't want it and you get rid of it.

And that is what is being taught here that believers are going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, this is going to happen after the Rapture of the Church, Brother Tommy just told us about. And we're going to stand before Jesus at the Bema Judgment and what's going to be judged there are not our sins, but what will be judged are the works that we have done for Christ, or the works that we have done in our lives in this body since we gave our lives to Jesus Christ. And what will be evaluated are those works that we have done that are of value to the Lord. And the Bible says that those things that we have done that are of value, then we will be rewarded for those things. And those things that we have done that are worthless, that are of no genuine eternal value will be burned up. We'll look at the passage in just a few minutes. But they will be burned up, and will be lost, but that we will be rewarded for those things that are of value to the Lord. Now why is it that when we are standing before the judgment seat of Christ that somehow we don't have to give an account of our sins? Why is that? Is God just going to overlook it? Are we just getting a pass? No, the passage that I spoke on last Sunday at our church is found in Colossians chapter 2, and here the scripture says that there was another judgment that took place one day, that was a judgment that was done as a substitute for our judgment. It was when the Lord Jesus Christ our glorious Savior was hanging on the cross. And the Bible says that having cancelled the charge of the legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us, Jesus has taken it away nailing it to the cross.

Now you know that the cross was like the means of, it was like the electric chair of the Roman Empire. It was the means of public execution. And so when a criminal, or when a person was crucified they would nail to the cross the charges for which that criminal was dying so that all who would walk by and see this person having been executed they would know the crimes for which that person was dying.

When our Lord Jesus was nailed to the cross, Pilate had the sign, "This is the King of the Jews." But the Bible says that's not really the crimes for which He was dying. The crimes for which He were dying, it says in Colossians 2:14 was that God nailed to the cross the record book of your sin. God nailed to the cross the record of your indebtedness, your sin debt to God. He nailed it to the cross. And while Jesus was hanging on that cross God began to treat Jesus like He would have treated you had you stood before God in judgment for your sins. That is why Jesus

cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Why? Because at that moment He was answering for my sins.

And so my sins, your sins were judged upon the cross. And because of the blood that Jesus Christ shed for your sins, because of the death that He died in your place. The Bible says that the record book of your sin was taken away, removed, canceled, there is no more record of your sin if you're a child of Jesus Christ. Is that not good news? Isn't that great news? And in fact if you stood before God and God then required for your sins to be judged again He would be unjust. And so Jesus has totally taken care of your sin, and that is why if you're here today, or if you're listening and you have never given your life to Jesus Christ we urge you today to do that, because if you will commit your life to Jesus then your sin will be completely, totally forever removed and taken away.

And because of that when the Lord Jesus comes for His bride the first thing He's going to do is not beat up His bride at the judgment. The first thing He's going to do is reward His bride. The Bible tells us there is a promise of rewards. There is the hope of reward. Now, I find that believers don't really talk about that a lot. I'm really amazed quite frankly when I talk to believers about the rewards, the reactions that I get. I cannot tell you how many times I will see someone do something maybe that is sweet or thoughtful or kind for someone and I will say something like "Well, the Lord is going to reward you for that." And people will go, "Oh, no, no, no, I'm not doing it for the reward. I don't want any reward." It is like they turn a double back flip to get away, not for rewards. Well, why is that? I think it is a misunderstanding of something that they think the Bible teaches, that it doesn't teach. They think that if the Lord promises us over, and over again in His Word that we are going to be rewarded for those things that we've done. But so many believers think that if they are motivated by the reward they will lose the reward. They think God promised rewards so we would be motivated to serve Him, but if by chance we are motivated by those rewards we will lose it. Now, where do they get that? Well I think it is like Matthew chapter 6 look on the screen. Jesus taught, "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them, if you do you will have no reward from your Father in Heaven. So when you give to the needy do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be honored by others, truly I tell you they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your giving may be done in secret. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others, truly I tell you they have received their reward in full. But when you pray go into your room, close the door, pray to your Father who is unseen, then your Father who is seen what is done in secret will reward you."

And so many people think that if somehow they do this work for the reward, they think somehow they lose the reward. But what Jesus was teaching is, He says, "Don't do it for the praise of men." But in fact you are supposed to do it for the praise of Jesus. We are supposed to be motivated that when we stand before the Lord one day that we would hear our wonderful Savior say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." That would have to be the most beautiful thing that you could ever hear in your entire eternity. For Jesus Christ to look at your life, and to sum up your life, and having examined it thoroughly to look at you and say, "Good job. Well done, good and faithful servant enter into the joy of the Lord prepared for you before the foundations of the world." What a great day that will be.

Some people do not, they don't think about rewards much because they're not really motivated all that much by rewards because they frankly think as many believers do that rewards are temporary. I was taught that one day I would die, or the Lord would come. I would stand before the Lord, the judgment seat of Christ. When it was all over with I might get some rewards. And if I got a crown then all of a sudden as it is revealed in Revelation chapter 4 that at this first worship service in Heaven that I would take my crown off, I would cast it at the feet of Jesus, and everybody else would do that then, and that you know then our crowns are gone. And then from then on that we are all the same for all eternity. And that somehow at best the rewards were temporary and therefore, not really all that motivated. I mean at that moment I'm sure it would be a great thing, but then eternity is a long time, I'm sure we'll get over it. A lot of people think that. And I think that is a misunderstanding, the Bible doesn't teach that. Revelation chapter 4, it says in verse 9, "Whenever," whenever, that is key, "whenever the living creatures give glory, and honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever. The 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they worship Him who lives forever and ever, and they lay their crowns before the throne. And they say, 'You are worthy our Lord and our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power. For You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.'"

Now, many people think, well see there we take our crowns off and we throw them at the feet of Jesus and that's it. Well number one don't base your whole theology of rewards on this because we're not totally sure who these 24 elders are. Now everybody has an opinion about it, but the last I saw there were like 13 different major opinions by scholars on who these elders are. But assume for a moment that they do represent the Church, and that they represent the Saints who are in Christ. And that they are there ruling and reigning around the throne, on their thrones as God promises us one day, and assume that these crowns represent our rewards. It does not say that for once and for all they take them off and throw them, and then it's gone. It says the opposite. It says, "Whenever." Now do you think whenever the living creatures give praise to God the Saints then take their crowns and throw them before the Lord, do you think that happens one time in eternity? Do you think there is only one time the living creatures are going to somehow break out in worship before God? No, this happens all the time. This is going to be happening all throughout eternity. So what seems to happen is if these elders do represent you, then you'll take your crown off as to give glory to Jesus, your crown, your reward is something you will be able to honor Him with and glorify Him with throughout eternity. Do you think it won't matter if you have no rewards with which to say to Him I glorified you on earth, I thought you were worthy of living a life for you now when I was on earth. Here are the rewards you've given me for that which I believed was just my reasonable service. You rewarded me with this, but I now place it at your feet, and say, "Lord, you are the one who deserves the honor, and the glory, and the praise, not me." And you will have these rewards with which this, this crown with which you will be able to do that over, and over, and over again throughout eternity.

So some people they don't think about rewards because they think they're not supposed to which is wrong. They think it's temporary which I think is wrong. In fact the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 it says, "Do you not know that in a race all of the runners run, but only one gets the prize, so run in such a way as to get the prize." Paul is saying be motivated in your life to get the prize. You are supposed to be motivated by the promise of rewards. So run in such a way as to get the prize. For everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training, they do it to get a crown that is temporary, it will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last, how

long? Forever. First Peter chapter 5, "And when the chief Shepherd appears you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." So there is misunderstanding about rewards.

I've also heard other people say, "Well, you know I don't really care about rewards. Doesn't really matter. I just want to make it to Heaven. And if I just get through the pearly gates, they slam the gates behind me I'll go, 'Shew I made it.'" And they think they'll be totally cool with that. They think that Heaven is going to be so wonderful, and it is, that it really won't matter to them for all eternity whether they have any rewards, because they kind of reason, we're all going to sort of be the same up there anyway. There's not going to be any distinctions between believers, so it doesn't really matter. But 1 Corinthians chapter 3 says, "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Christ Jesus. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, and costly stones, wood, hay or straw their work will be shown for what it is because the day, the judgment seat will bring it to light. It will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what he has built survives the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up the builder will suffer loss, but yet, will be saved even though as one escaping through the flames." For the Bible says at that moment, at the judgment seat, when you're life's work for Christ is evaluated, and what you've done for Christ is evaluated by Christ and judged of whether it was valuable to Him, or whether you spent your life doing those things that were not worth what Christ wanted you to live for. Then the Bible says your life's work could be lost. You think it won't matter to you at that moment? Do you think that when somebody, a child, a genuine child of God, the only ones who will be standing there are genuine believers. Do you think that there is a genuine believer who could truly stand and when their name is called, and their moment to stand face-to-face and look into the face of their Savior, and to see the nail prints in His hands, and His feet, and see and recognize what He has done? He sacrificed everything. He left all of His glory, and He came and became a man to redeem me. He gave everything for me. And at that moment do you think you're not going to care when you say, "Well, I took your salvation. I was glad to have it. I'm glad to be here, but I didn't think you were worth living for. I didn't think it was worth sacrificing for You." I think it's going to be a terrible thing to stand there having wasted a life.

Some people are not motivated by rewards because they sort of have this view that Heaven is going to be socialist. They think that there are going to be some people over there, man they really they were sold out to Jesus Christ, they lived their life for God, they really made it count. And then there's going to others over here who were half-hearted in their devotion to Christ, but we'll get there and after the casting of the crowns that will happen once and for all, then we're all just the same and there is no distinctions in Heaven for all of eternity. And they reason this on the fact that they think, well if I saw somebody who had more rewards than me I'd be jealous. And there's not going to be any jealousy in Heaven, so therefore there can't be any distinctions in Heaven. Now, that's flawed human logic, 'cause it's not what the Bible teaches. Now, it is correct they'll be no jealousy in Heaven. But it's not because there is no distinctions between believers and rewards, but is because we will all be motivated by perfect love at that point. It will be like one of my children having done something and becoming very successful and doing something that far exceeded me in my life. I would be happy for them, not jealous of them because I love them. We will love our brothers and sisters, and when we see someone who did devote their life to Christ, others who gave their lives to Christ, we will admire them. We will praise them. We will thank them for their service and we will be encouraged, and we will love them, but we will not be jealous. But believe me there will be distinction in Heaven because

what you do now in this life you have has a profound impact on what you have and what you will do for all of eternity.

The Bible tells us that there are numbers of distinctions, and numbers of different kinds of rewards, and I don't even pretend to say that I understand all of it. But I know enough to know that it's going to be worth it all when we see Jesus. And what we do now it really matters. There are some of you here you've been living for the Lord for years, and years, and years, and maybe you're tired. Maybe you are beginning to wonder does it really matter all that much? And the Lord wants you to know today, oh it matters, and I will not forget one thing you have done for me. And on that great day it will be worth it. It matters. What you do now with your life will have a profound impact on your eternity; how you live in eternity. For example the Bible teaches that there are at least five different crowns that will be handed out by the Lord Jesus Christ. We've already read of one in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 it says, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? So, run to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training they do it to get a crown that will not last, we do it to get a crown that will last forever." This is called the Incorruptible Crown, or it's called, some people call it the Victor's Crown. This is a crown that evidently you will have, the person will have who has run the race that Christ has set before them as Hebrews chapter 12 talks about. In other words this is a person who said, "Not my will Lord, but you're will be done. I want to live my life for You. What do you want for my life? Lord I lay this, I deny myself, and I want to follow you with my life." And this person who runs this race by faith, and they run this race this--God's will for their life. Then the Bible says that you will be given the Victor's Crown, you'll be given the Incorruptible Crown that will last forever.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Wow! Now, folks, that's what I call preaching! Pastor Meredith continued in his presentation to give an overview of all the different types of rewards that are promised by the Scriptures. And in a moment our announcer will tell you how you can get a copy of his full presentation plus the presentations of the other five speakers at our conference.

Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it's been a blessing to you, and I hope, the Lord willing, that you will be back with us next week. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program