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## **ETERNAL REWARDS**

Revelation 19:6-9

Scripture and story - marriage supper and 2 suits from Erwin Lutzer

Bride made herself ready with righteous deeds - Invitation + Fine Linens

### **I. Doctrines**

There are two main doctrines: we all get the same rewards vs. there are varying rewards (t-shirt analogy)

#### **1. Same for all**

- a) Every faithful follower of Jesus Christ will receive: Heaven, seeing God and living in His glory, glorified body, salvation
- b) 1 Corinthians 15:51-52  
...but is this all?

### **II. Varying - rewards are worked for**

Heaven is a real place where real life happens. Size of heaven. Time is still real.

Revelation 21:15-17

*15 He who talked with me had a golden rod to measure the city and its gates and wall.*

*16 The city lies as a square, its length as long as its width. He measured the city with the rod: one thousand four hundred miles. Its length and breadth and height are equal. 17 He then measured its wall: two hundred feet by the measurement of a man, that is, of an angel.*

Why all of this detail if its not a real, time-bound place?

#### **A. Rewards for works**

1. We serve a just and fair King, who loves us. Grace alone brings us into the kingdom. Nothing we can do on our own can ever 'earn' this for us:  
Ephesians 2:8-9  
*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
2. In this sense, the gift of "eternal life" is given to all believers equally based on their faith alone. But there is plenty of Scripture suggesting there is a reward awaiting us in Heaven beyond our Salvation, and this reward will be distributed to us on the basis of our obedience and love for God demonstrated in our mortal lives.  
**Let's look at some verses making the case for differing levels of reward in Heaven.**

#### **B. Jesus Said That There Are Rewards in Heaven**

Jesus specifically told us that Heaven is a place where rewards will be given to the saved. Look at Jesus' words from the most important sermon He ever gave (the Sermon on the Mount):

Matthew 5:11-12

*"Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of*

*evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Matthew 6:1-6, Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 6:20

1. From this one sermon it is clear there is a “reward in heaven” waiting for each of us who is saved. There are “treasures in heaven” for each of us. God has rewards waiting for us, and much of this sermon from Jesus is an admonition for us not to forsake our heavenly reward by seeking worldly rewards and acknowledgment.

#### **C. Jesus Also Said That There Are DEGREES of Reward in Heaven**

Jesus told his followers each of them would receive a reward in heaven based on what they did here on earth:

Matthew 16:27

*For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.*

Revelation 22

1. This statement is so clear and direct it can hardly be argued. Jesus promised to “repay each person according to what he has done” (ESV). Think about it for a minute. If Jesus is not telling us God dispenses fair and just rewards (and punishments) in the next life, what in the world does this passage mean?
2. To further advance the point, Jesus used a famous parable to illustrate this for his followers:  
Matthew 25:14-30
3. Jesus clearly told his followers the Kingdom of Heaven would be a place where individual saved believers would be rewarded according to their deeds. If you do a lot with what God has given you; you will get a greater reward in Heaven. If you squander what God has given you; don’t be surprised to find that your reward is much less.

#### **D. Paul Agrees That There Are Degrees of Reward**

Paul seemed to understand this as well. When writing to the believers in Rome, he used language very similar to the language used by Jesus:

Romans 2:5-6

*But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds...*

1. Since we know from the scriptures God does not render salvation according to our deeds, what is it He is rendering? He is rendering reward according to our deeds. This means as our deeds increase, our reward increases as well. Look at what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He clearly told them their Salvation was built on Christ alone, but in addition to this, each of us, as saved Christians, also builds on this foundation of Salvation resulting in our reward in Heaven:  
1 Corinthians 3:11-15
2. Paul clearly proclaims rewards are waiting for us as saved Christians. But he is also clear about the fact some of us will receive more reward than others. Some will work here on earth to create something persevering and as a result will obtain an enduring

reward in Heaven. Others will not produce enduring work here on earth, and while they will still be saved, their reward in heaven will be nothing more than Salvation (“he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire”).

3. Eagerly awaiting our blessed hope - Titus 2:12-13

#### E. Solomon Agrees That There Are Degrees of Reward

God has always maintained there are varying degrees of reward in Heaven. Even the Old Testament speaks of this truth. Look at what Solomon says:

Proverbs 24:12

*If you say, “See, we did not know this,” Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?*

1. God’s point = **we will be saved by His work and rewarded by our work.**

### III. HOW TO EARN

He hears and rewards every word - He is keeping record!

Matthew 12:36

#### A. Biblical Christianity - what we’re already called to do!

1. Jesus’ teachings - heart, faithfulness, consistency, meditate on big pic (**Calvin** 170)

2. Hebrews 11:6 - earnestness of heart

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

3. Jeremiah 17:9-10 - guarding our heart from sin

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”*

4. 1 Samuel 16:7 - God looks at the heart

*But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”*

5. Sermon on the Mount is all about heart motivations

This seems too easy! Why? Because we have bought into the lie of being good by doing good. The Christian truth is that God makes us righteous, so that we CAN do good!

#### B. We are saved, reborn, able to do good (**Ephesians 2:8-10**)

*8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

...but sin and temptation are still very real. (**Calvin** 171) To the extent that we obey Jesus’ teaching to live holy/righteous, God rewards us. Titus 2:12-13. We clearly see, then, that works don’t and can’t (could never) save us, good works are only possible after salvation. Doing good things isn’t enough, it must be for God.

#### IV. WHAT IS EARNED

A. **“What is it that will earn us a reward?”** The Scriptures are pretty clear about this as well.

B. Crown, Responsibility/rule and reign, Greatest and Least - **T-shirt analogy**

C. Let's begin in the Old Testament and read from the Book of Daniel:

Daniel 12:3

*“And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

1. In describing the heavenly order of things, Daniel said “those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Did you notice Daniel used the word “many” when describing the number of people we might lead to righteousness? By using the word, “many”, Daniel made a comparison to the possibility of leading “few” to righteousness. This comparison tells us something about how we can earn a reward. Some of us will ‘shine brighter’ in heaven for having brought more ‘to righteousness’. **It appears our effort to bring people to the truth about God and tell them about His free gift of Salvation is rewarded by God in the next life. -**

**IS THAT NOT A PART OF WHAT YOU ARE DOING HERE?!**

2. Paul understood this. When writing to the Thessalonians, he said he expected to have great joy and a “crown of exultation” in Heaven. He expected heavenly reward.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

*For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*

3. Paul knew his work here on earth was important because it produced believers who would then someday join him in Heaven. Paul understood what Daniel taught: the more people you bring to Heaven, the greater your reward in Heaven will be.

D. God enjoys rewarding his Children with increased and valuable roles of **responsibility!** Look at the Apostles for a minute. Jesus told them they would be rewarded with roles as the “judges” over the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus told them their reward would be increased and more powerful responsibilities. This is consistent with the parable from Matthew 25:14-30. In the parable, Jesus affirmed the rest of us will also earn greater responsibilities as the result of our efforts here on earth (“I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master”)

E. Sometimes we see responsibility here on earth as a burden, but in Heaven, when we are reunited with the God who gave us every talent we possess, His reward will be responsibilities maximizing our talents in such a way as to produce great joy. We will have a complete sense of our own significance and role in Heaven. Joy will be ours.

#### V. WORLDVIEW IMPLICATIONS

A. If you believe this, it changes how you live, act and react

1. Prayer, Bible reading, church life, mentoring, worship, evangelism, works

End with passing out a coin, reward and reflection/quiet spot time. Ring the gong when its over.