

Just What Will the Christian be judged For?

I have a series of lessons dealing with the Judgment Seat of Christ, but the purpose of this particular series of lessons is to view our life in this present period from birth until death in light of what eternity holds in store for each one of us. To have an understanding of what is awaiting us at the Judgment Seat of Christ, would certainly, be a tremendous incentive to live with rewards in view.

Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 3:10 that God made him a *“wise master builder,”* building the Church of Jesus Christ. He says that he laid the foundation of the Church – by his teaching the inspired, revelation of God’s Word. The Church was laid on the *“foundation,”* Jesus Christ (verse 11). And he adds, *“Let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.”* Verses 12 and 13 continue, *“Whatever is used by those who build upon this foundation – gold, silver, precious stone – or – wood, hay, stubble [straw] – will be come to light because **‘the Day’** [Judgment Seat of Christ] will test it with a blaze of fire”*

Verses 14 and 15 state, *“If the work that any man has built on the foundation survives he will receive reward for his labor. But if a man’s work is destroyed under the test, he loses it all. He will be like a man escaping through a wall of fire”* – These are very sobering words!

“Take heed how you build upon the Foundation” WE are all saved through faith in Jesus Christ – He is the *Foundation* of our faith! However, upon that Foundation, we are to be *extremely careful how we build our life!* We can build with material that is likened unto gold, silver, and precious stones. Fire cannot destroy the value of these materials; it can only destroy the dross. Gold, silver, and precious stones are only made better by flames. They represent the true works of the Holy Spirit wrought in and through our life for God’s glory and His honor. Such works are made possible as a result of the New Birth. After we are *“Born-again,”* we learn to *“live after the Spirit”* and be *“led by the Spirit”* because He alone knows the mind of God. We must say with Jesus, *“I always do those things that please the Father.”*

“Wood, hay, and stubble” are the types of works that cannot stand fire! Fire will consume these materials and destroy any value that they may have had. Fire reduces them to a pile of ashes.

I well recall back in 1997, one night in Rome, New York, to wake up around 3 in the morning and see a fire consume a row of stores across the street from where we lived. The flames were higher than the telephone poles, the wind whipping the flames across the street until the electric wires overhead were singed and scorched. The heat was so hot that firemen had an extremely difficult time even getting near the fire. The next morning, what had been a row of fine businesses -- a restaurant where many of the town’s people visited on a daily basis -- was nothing but ashes covering the ground. The fire had deteriorated it!

Scripture teaches that worthless works, like wood, hay, and stubble, (works produced by the flesh), may seem to be very valuable in the sight of man in this life, but will be destroyed and reduced to ashes by the acid test of God’s consuming fire.

Works of the flesh -- working through natural abilities alone -- the self-centered life -- works for self-glory -- and the praise of man -- cannot remain in the presence of God, nor enter into heaven, and will be extinguished at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

In this present life, the truth concerning these materials may not be known. Wood hay, and stubble works can be camouflaged -- sprayed with gold paint or covered with gold leaf and paraded before man as pure gold. The natural eye may not be able to tell the difference, but the fire of God will.

Wood, hay, and stubble works may be made to look like gold, silver, and precious stones, and bring great glory before the eyes of men – but not so at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

Only if our works that we have built down here in this present life survives the fire will we receive a reward from Christ – the true Judge!

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

While this “rewarding time” may be a sad, disappointing time, for some, however, it will be a time of expressing joy, rejoicing, and a feeling gratitude for the knowledge of the believer receiving reward for faithful Christian works.

However, some “will suffer loss, being saved as by fire!” The picture, drawn by the Holy Spirit is that of someone being saved alive out of a fire, but losing everything he owns in the process. He does not lose his soul, or his salvation, but he suffers a personal loss of rewards because his Christian life was based on materials (wood, hay, and stubble) that will not stand the test of Christ’s judgment.

God’s future plans and positions (rewards for faithful living) will be on the bases of the materials we use to build our Christian life in this present world.

Some Christians have been saved for thirty, forty, fifty years and still have never realized that Scripture teaches of a time and place, called “*The Judgment Seat of Christ.*” Sometimes, it seems, that we get all our theology from the hymnbooks. I thank God for the glorious truths the old hymns of the church disclose, but it isn’t always wise to accept all they say without searching the pages of God’s Word to see if what they say is true.

So many Christians seem to think that we will go immediately, at the Rapture of the Church, to the great celebration of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This event will, of course, be a glorious time. We sing about the Marriage Supper of the Lamb -- we read much about it – revel in the wonderful promises concerning this breathtaking occasion spoken of in Scripture with our Lord! We sing, and shout, and dance in grand anticipation of this coming affair.

However, Scripture tells us that we will first stand before Jesus Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ, before entering into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb – and some “*will suffer loss*” -- and --some “*will be ashamed*” (or shrink away) from Christ when they see Him.

God knows that it is not my intention to take away any of the grand and glorious expectation of the wonders and beauties of heaven. But I do believe that the seriousness of our standing before Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the way that we have lived our present life down here on this earth – from the moment of our conversion until we either die or go up with Christ at the Rapture!

I heard of a story – told by a minister who lived close to these people, and tells it as an actual, true story. There was a couple that built their dream house. They were very wealthy so money was not a problem. They had material shipped in from all over the world. It was something that they had dreamed of most of their life and they expected to enjoy it for the rest of their days on earth. They watched as the contractors built day after day, making sure it was according to the plans they had drawn – and that the right precious, special-ordered, materials were used. Finally it was complete. They had sufficient money to buy anything their hearts desired. It was filled with the finished furniture money could obtain. It was to be their home where they would spend the rest of their earthly life.

Only a few days after they moved in, while they were away for the evening, the house burned down. The minister, who lived near by, tell of the agony and grief he witnessed as these folks saw their new home burn up with everything in it – they wept before everyone gathered at the ashes because of their loss.

Natural fires bring terrible loss. Many things that are burned up in this world can be replaced by money, hard work and sweat. However, when we have left this life and stand in Eternity and, if we suffer loss of works, we will never again have the privilege of replacing them no matter how much crying or remorse may be in our hearts. They are lost forever.

Can you even begin to imagine what it will be like for a Christian to stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat and see all of his life’s work go up in smoke? Will he feel no remorse and shame? Oh, yes, there will be remorse and tears for some in Heaven at that time.

But, someone says, “*There’ll be no tears in heaven!*” It is true that the Bible says, “*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*” (Revelation 21:4). Noticed, however, that this takes place after the one thousand years of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth, even after the Great White Throne Judgment of the wicked. These events take place at least one thousand years after the Judgment Seat of Christ. Not until after God has destroyed this world by fire, not until the beginning of the New Hearn and New Earth, will God, in mercy, “*wipe away all tears*” -- removing the sense of remorse over the loss of works at the Judgment Seat of Christ -- a loss that one could possibly be conscious of for one thousand years!

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament God promises that He will “Make ***all things*** new!” In Revelation 21:1-8 God promises, as John writes:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

And, through Isaiah the prophet, in Isaiah 65:17, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

Everyone in heaven throughout all eternity will be adjusted to be happy – blissful -- according to his capacity. It, evidently, depends on how a Christian lives in the revealed will of God, and what materials he has built his Christian living on.

I don’t want to be misunderstood, there will be no disappoints, or sorrow, throughout eternity. It seems that at the Judgment Seat of Christ degrees of rewards and positions in Christ’s millennial reign on earth will be distributed, after which God will “wipe all tears from our eyes.” And “everybody will be happy over there!”

As I understand it, it would be much like persons developing their palate -- (or sense of taste) --- down here on earth. Some folk are completely satisfied with a Mc Donald hamburger and French fries, while others have developed their taste buds until they thoroughly enjoy Cordon Bleu, pheasant under glass, or Fricassee (FRIHK-uh-see).

Both are utterly content with what they have to eat – the difference is in their capacity to enjoy and take pleasure in what they have. There is no disappointment or sadden in either person’s life – the only variation is in what it takes to bring them happiness and satisfaction.

Scripture makes it clear that some Christians will lose rewards -- and positions of rank during the millennial age, because of their unfaithfulness to God and His will in this present life. They will be “disqualified” to reign in the position they might have received in Christ Jesus during His reign on earth.

I can hear some says, “I don’t care if I don’t get any reward, all I want is just to get inside of Heaven’s gate!”

I have heard different ones say, “I don’t care if I get any presents this Christmas or not.” But, when Christmas morning rolls around and they see others receiving their Christmas presents -- and they receive nothing -- they are disappointed and want to run off somewhere and hide. **That pales in comparison with the disappointment of not receiving rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.**

I don’t have words enough -- and cannot begin to attempt to explain what I believe Scripture teaches about the disappointment of Christians who have built their life on “word, hay, and stubble.”

Our “rewards” received at the Judgment Seat of Christ, is not so that we can parade them before other saints -- saying something like, “See what I have” -- but, rather, it is to lay them at the feet of Jesus, something to return to Him. In Luke 19:11-27 Jesus gives a parable of the “pounds” (“minas”, or “dollars”) revealing the rewards in Christ’s coming Kingdom depending on the investment of one’s life. The “servants” had in their possession the amount of return, for their Master, according to what they had “earned” with their talents.

Satan works diligently to blind this truth to as many Christians as he possibly can. Through their lack of such knowledge, he can take advantage to them and blight their spiritual character. If he cannot send them to hell, because they have come to Christ, he will inspire them to produce works of wood hay, and stubble – worthless Christian works, knowing that at the Judgment Seat of Christ they will suffer loss.

Satan knows that God has bound Himself to His Word so that even He Himself cannot change it. It is so important for us to judge our motives -- to test and examine our Christian life on the basis of God’s Word. We must build according to the blueprint God has given us, so that we will not suffer loss in Eternity. This will mean everything to us when we are called to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

One man, who had been a faithful Christian throughout his life since he had accepted Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior -- a godly father -- serving in several capacities in the local church -- faithful in using what God had placed in his hands -- his life had been an out-spoken testimony for God, as he lay dying, he knew that he had only a few hours to live. His pastor came to comfort him and said, “Isn’t it wonderful, you will soon be in Heaven?” He said to his pastor, “I feel like I have done so little for God and now I will stand before Him. Oh! How little I have done!”

His pastor tried to encourage him for the deeds that he had performed in his faithfulness to God. He said, “Cheer up, brother, think of the money you have given to God’s work, think of the life you have lived.” The man looked into the pastor’s eyes, and said, “Pastor, I know all that -- but in a few hours I will be in Heaven, in the presence of my God, and I feel like I have done so little.”

Every one of us will give an account of himself before God! **Are you ready?**

- Am I ready to give an account of myself to God?
- Am I ready to receive according to what I have done in this life?

- Am I ready to have my works manifested before God, to have the motives of my Christian life revealed by Christ before Almighty God?

Am I ready to receive my rewards -- rewards according to my works?

Remember, when the Lord comes, He will do two things.

- (1) He will bring hidden things to light, and
- (2) Make manifest the councils of the heart.

The next lesson will deal with "*The Worthless Works of a Christian*"