

## Wrath, Rewards, & Regrets

One day a little boy, much to the alarm of his mother, was missing from the village in which they lived. The town's people gathered and decided after searching the whole village that, unfortunately, the little fellow must have wandered up into the dangerous mountains that overlooked the village. The problem was the mountain. It was a treacherous climb due to the severe cliff drops and precarious footholds. This caused the townspeople considerable doubt as to whether they could be successful in finding the boy.

But the mother of the lost child was completely frantic with fear and longing to have her boy found and brought back safely in her arms. So the townspeople decided to gather the strongest, most able-bodied men of the village to take on the search. After many hazardous and unsuccessful hours of scaling over the jagged rocks without finding the little boy, the tired men were forced to give up their search. There was nothing more they could do.

The men regrouped at the foot of the mountain and along with the rest of the villagers discussed how they were going to break the bad news to the poor, panicked mother. All of a sudden they looked up and, much to their great surprise, the mother was descending the mountainside with her boy clutched in her arms. They were amazed! "How," someone asked her, "did you find the boy after the all the villages strongest men searched so hard and could not find him?"

She simply said, "They aren't his mother!"

I love that story! As we have been going through The Book of Revelation, we see how unwilling God is that people will perish. His desire is for sinners to repent and live forever with Him!

**One of the great things about being a Christian is getting to join God in what He is doing. He doesn't merely save us so we can cheer him on as He continues to advance His Kingdom on earth; He has saved us to join Him in what He is doing on earth.**

Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!" And then He gave us the Holy Spirit and all the resources we need to be part of His kingdom advancing on earth! And being part of what God is doing is simply not optional for believers, something only for super Christians.

**Now there is a clear truth taught in every part of the Bible that is often neglected today: each of us will stand before God one day and give an account to Him of our thoughts, motives, words and deeds.**

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or bad." -2 Cor. 5:10

Read Revelation 11:15-19      Wrath, Rewards, and Regrets      LET'S PRAY!

**V. 15-17      Anticipation Brings Praise!**

You may have noticed as we go through Revelation, that every few chapters everything seems to stop, and we are brought back to Heaven, where they are besides themselves with expectation about Christ's Second Coming!

And for a moment you think, it's done now, right?! And then Revelation tells you some more about what will happen, and then another passage acts like it's already over! What's going on in passages like this?

**As we get closer to Christ's Second Coming, Heaven is bursting with anticipation about Christ's coming reign, and the righting of all wrongs!**

When it says, "has become" in verse 15, or "has come" in verse eighteen, it is referring not to the instance of this announcement but in the soon to be accomplished 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and all that will happen after it!

Kind of like when your team is up by 20 points with 45 seconds left, your coach calls a timeout and puts in the bench players, the driver starts warming up the bus and the away fans start singing, "na na na na, na na na na, hey hey hey, goodbye!"

The evil impact of Satan on earth is almost done! The last saint is about to get home! As the 24 elders think about this moment, they rejoice in anticipation!

## **V. 18 Wrath and Rewards**

This verse anticipates the dead being judged, which is bad news for those who destroy the earth, but good news for those whom God will reward!

Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment.

**When you read the Bible, it appears there are two times of judgment coming, one for those who have repented and believed, and one for those who haven't repented.**

**For those who haven't repented, there will be the Great White Throne Judgment we'll talk about in Rev. 20.**

**But there is also a judgment just for believers, sometimes referred to as the judgment at the Bema Seat, because that is the Greek word used in 2 Cor. 5:10 when it says believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.**

It also will be sometime in the future after the Rapture, exactly when, we are not sure! Perhaps after the Rapture during the Tribulation, Perhaps it goes with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Perhaps after the millennium, we're not sure.

I like what Ron Dunn said when he did revival here years ago. Ron said the judgment of believers has to come at the end, because our full impact isn't made until the end.

For instance, people are still reading and being blessed by John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and if it's true that our deeds on earth can store up a future reward for us, every time someone is blessed by *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan's reward gets bigger!

John Bunyan himself anticipated this future time of rewards given to believers.

**"Consider, to provoke you to good works, that you shall have from God, when you come to glory, a reward for everything you do for him on earth." -John Bunyan** Quoted in Randy Alcorn, *The Law of Rewards*, 70

Now far more important for us then the "When" of the Bema judgment is understanding the "Who" and the "Why" and the "What" of the Bema judgment!

**WHO will be at the Bema seat of Christ?**

**Believers only, those who have repented of their sins and trusted Jesus alone for salvation- everyone there will be receiving the ultimate reward, Heaven!**

That takes care of the who, but that brings up the why!

**If we're going to Heaven based on what Christ has done, and all our sins are forgiven, WHY will Christ still judge us?**

**Because everything we do on earth matters!**

Too many Christians act like salvation is their ticket to Heaven but has no bearing on how they live their life now!

But the Bible makes clear over and over that after you are saved you have the privilege of serving Christ, and everything you do for Christ will be rewarded in Heaven!

**“No one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid- that is, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on the 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, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire.” -I Cor. 3:11-15**

Jesus Himself emphasized getting ready for Heaven:

**“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.” -Matthew 6:19-21**

Randy Alcorn has said, “You can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead!”

Great saints in the past who knew they were saved by grace still thought like this!

**“I hope to grow rich in Heaven by taking care of orphans on earth!” -George Whitfield**

These things are put there to inspire us to enthusiastically serve our 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.” -Col. 3:23**

In Ruth Graham’s kitchen there hung this sign:

**“Divine service performed here three times daily.”**

What, Danny? Worship while I am cooking, doing the dishes or laundry, mowing the grass, changing a diaper, meeting with a difficult client, taking a test?

Yep! I’ll say it stronger, if you haven’t learned to worship while you are doing those things, your Sunday morning singing is probably not very good worship either!

I have a sheet down here for those that want it after the service. It gives Ten Things the Bible says Believers WILL be rewarded for!

**Now some object to this saying, “Danny, if you talk about rewards too much, people will lose sight of grace!” I have three answers to that objection-**

- 1. I believe part of our time before Christ will definitely make clear to us that we’re only saved by grace-**

We’ll stand one on one with Christ, and He will somehow show us how much His blood had to cover in our lives, and we’ll know: we are only there because of His grace, only there because we pled the blood!

Don't plead the fifth on that day, plead the blood!

And I can see the Lord saying to me, "all this stuff was wood, hay, and stubble, wasn't it?" And for that moment my head will bow in sorrow and regret for my carnal deeds as a Christian.

And then He'll have me look at those nail-scarred hands, and He'll say, "It's all washed in the blood! And my heart will be filled with gratitude for Jesus' blood!"

**2. There are too many times the Bible and Jesus Himself tells us to do what we do in part for future reward to overlook this key teaching!**

In other words, I'll take Jesus' affirmation of reward seeking over your rejection of reward seeking! Every time!

**3. This goes to the nature of how men especially are created!**

I follow E.P.L.; Others do fantasy football; Others work very hard on a golf game that isn't going to get any better!

We give our energy to all kinds of things that don't really matter eternally!

It is here that Jesus meets us and bids us to give our energy to things that matter!

Scripture makes clear that everything we do as Christians on earth matters, and we will be rewarded publicly for the things we did for Jesus!

**Now you can do two things with that truth:**

**You can keep living for earthly priorities and have regrets on that day!**

**Or you can re-order your life around kingdom priorities!**

Don't make it a legalistic thing, though - have fun with it!

**FIRST DOWN FOR JESUS!**

So believers will be rewarded at the Bema seat of Christ.

But there is another facet of this we need to know.

**“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 judgment seat 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.”**  
**-Romans 14:10-12**

**“Therefore don’t judge anything prematurely, before the Lord comes, who will 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.”**  
**-I Corinthians 4:5**

Oh Oh! This makes it look like there will be more than just a personal part of our Bema seat judgment.

So what will this look like? We are not sure, but this is a place I want to paint a possible picture for you.

**What is between wrath, which we won’t experience, and rewards, which are based on what we do for Jesus?                      Regrets**

Think about the conflicts you have had with other Christians.  
 Could it be after individuals stand before Christ, He will call people together to talk through conflicts and have them settle things before eternity.

I think there is a good possibility it will happen. You won’t get to be on one side of Heaven while they are on the other!

Perhaps churches will come before him and give an account for our failures to be our brother’s keepers!    WOW! That’s intense!

Well, that brings me to a big question:

**Can what will be a future regret turn into a future reward?**

Yes, and I think that is why we are told so specifically about this time now!

What are we ultimately being judged for at the Bema seat?

What we did with the specific commands of Jesus!

Things we knew we shouldn’t have done but did!

Things we could have done for Jesus but didn’t!

Relationships we could have tried to restore but didn’t!

Jesus said, “if you are bringing your gift to the altar, and recall your brother has something against you, first go try to make it right, and then bring your gift!”

**If you don’t try to restore that relationship now, it will be a regret at the Bema seat. If you do try to restore that relationship now, it will be a reward at the Beam seat!**

Some of us have deep relationship regrets

“I wasn’t there for my child during their formative years- now I have such regrets.”  
Can I turn that regret into a reward? Absolutely!

You do get it now!	You have poured out your heart to Jesus!
God has forgiven you!	Accept His forgiveness!
Pray for that child!	Make the most of your time with them now!

“I have been awful toward my parents- now I get it and have such regrets!”

Can you turn that regret into a reward? Absolutely!

If you have truly repented, do everything you can now to honor your parents, even in you can only honor their memory!

**In all you do, take the long view!** Explain, Danny!

This world is not all there is!

Deal with these things now, before it’s too late!

When you repent, Heaven responds! And regrets become rewards!

**Sin that is not repented of will always be exposed. It’s a principle of the universe: *One way or the other, we’ll have to deal with our sin.*** -Crawford Loritts, 23

Let’s Pray!