

**Joke:** Starting a trial, a Southern small-town prosecuting attorney called his first witness, a grandmotherly, elderly woman to the stand. He approached her and asked, Mrs. Jones, do you know me? She responded, Why, yes, I do know you, Mr. Williams.

I've known you since you were a boy, and frankly, you've been a big disappointment to me. You lie, you cheat, and you manipulate people and talk about them behind their backs. You think you're a big shot when you haven't the brains to realize you'll never amount to anything more than a two-bit paper pusher. Yes, I know you.

The lawyer was stunned. Not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and asked, Mrs. Jones, do you know the defense attorney?

She again replied, Why yes, I do. I've known Mr. Bradley since he was a youngster, too. He's lazy, bigoted, and he has a drinking problem. He can't build a normal relationship with anyone, and his law practice is one of the worst in the entire state. Yes, I know him to.

The defense attorney nearly died.

The judge asked both counselors to approach the bench and, in a very quiet voice, said, If either of you idiots asks her if she knows me, I'll send you both to the prison.

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If you remember when we started this series I asked a few questions today I'm going to deal with two of them the first was question number 2 remember what it was?

Christian's will give an account for their sins on judgement day? In case your wondering that one is false as well.

Hebrews 9:27–28 (NLT): And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, 28 so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

That Scripture is pretty clear there is going to be a judgment but what will that look like? Notice the last part of verse 28: He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

When Christ comes back it will be without reference to sin. Why?

Because He already took care of that issue. We've already been put on trial, we were found guilty, and God carried out our sentence through His Son.

Again I ask what will the judgment look like? Some think there are two different and separate judgments. I don't believe that is the case. But let's look at the judgment.

Revelation 20:11–15 (NIV): Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.  
12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged

according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

This verse is talking about unbelievers not us Christians.

How can I be so sure look at verse 13. . .The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.

And because their names were not written in the book of life, they are judged according to their deeds. Why isn't their name in the book of life. They rejected the Gospel.

Why aren't we as believers in Jesus judged according to our deeds? Because we are forgiven for all our evil deeds, past, present, and future. Because Christ died

once for all to all who would receive Him.

Remember Hebrews 8

Hebrews 8:12 (NIV): For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

I will what. Remember their sins no more.

So, John in this chapter is addressing them, the unbelievers. However, the Bride of Christ, we believers arrive in the next chapter of Revelation.

Revelation 21:1 (NIV): Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Notice how John starts off with the word then. This signals a different group and just so you know it also has a different outcome.

He continues. . .

Revelation 21:2–3 (NIV): I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.  
3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

He goes on to tell us He will wipe every tear from our eyes, there will be no more sickness or pain.

Think about it if our sins are forgiven, and Christ remembers them no more, why would they be brought up on judgment day.

Could that be the reason John writes these words. . .

1 John 4:17–18 (NIV): This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made

perfect in love.

In this world we are like who? Jesus.

We are like Him. So we can be confident on judgment day.

In our legal system we have this thing called double jeopardy. Are you familiar with that? What it means is that someone cannot be tried twice for the same crime.

And with God it is much the same way. We have already been put on trial and the verdict was guilty. And the punishment was death. But here's the Good News, Jesus took the punishment that we deserved and died on our behalf.

John 3:18 (NIV): Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

And listen to this one:

John 12:47–48 (NIV): 47 “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.  
48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

And some ask and believe that God doles out punishment for our choices while we are here on earth as a consequence of those bad choices we make.

But what you need to understand is that not everything is attributed to God.

We have the world, the flesh, the devil.

You get sick, you lose your job, your spouse leaves and everyone tries to connect the dots on why God did it you.

Remember Job?



The truth is church God doesn't want the credit.

Hear this, God may allow some of the circumstances in your life but that by no means suggests that He caused them.

God never treats His children cruelly.

God is not the author of things like pain, sin, death. But the good news is, he can work all things out for our good and His glory in the midst of all of that.

I remember when 9/11 hit, no not my birthday, the terrorist attack. Some came out believing that it was brought on by God to teach us a lesson.

But look what Scripture tells us:

John 12:32 (NIV): And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV): The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV): that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Look at His desire. . .draw people to myself, not wanting anyone to perish, reconciling the world to Himself.

Look what He wants to do. . .

Acts 26:18 (NIV): to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Does that sound like a God that is going to hijack a plane or two to crash into a building and destroy thousands

of lives. I don't think so.

That doesn't mean there aren't consequences for our actions.

And we need to warn others about those.

Broken relationships, health risks, personal ruin, financial trouble but never should we think that all those are a punishment from God.

Planet Earth comes at you. Christ works in you.

And listen there may be times that God disciplines us, but God's discipline is training for your future, not punishment for your past.

So, if you're fearful about Christ's return it may be that religion told you that there'll be a movie reel playing of your sins as everyone watches. But that's just not the case.

The next one I want to share with you was question 5, surely you remember that one? Ok I'll help you out with this one too. It was, the Bible tells us that we will obtain rewards in heaven by how much we do here on earth?

So what about these rewards? Does our performance here on earth lead to different or better rewards being handed out in heaven?

First of all let me say this, the word rewards (plural) is nowhere to be found in any New Testament letter.

They do say reward, a prize, a crown of life and each one seems to be pointing to the same thing.

Matthew 20:1–15 (NLT): “For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work. 3 “At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. 4 So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was

right at the end of the day. 5 So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock he did the same thing. 6 "At five o'clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?' 7 "They replied, 'Because no one hired us.' "The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.' 8 "That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. 9 When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage. 10 When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. 11 When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, 12 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.' 13 "He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? 14 Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. 15 Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?

Have you ever noticed they all got paid the same? Even though the ones that showed up early in the morning must have done more work than those that came in later. And then the other thing he started paying the ones that showed up last, first. (Talk about that)

Matthew 6:19–21 (NLT): Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

When God tells us to store up treasures in Heaven, He's asking us to consider our daily choices and their outcomes.

One more thing. . . a treasure is not a reward. Treasures are discovered, not earned. Jesus was challenging them and us to take on a heavenly perspective rather than an earthly one.

Colossians 3:23–24 (NIV): Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

An inheritance isn't something earned. It's something passed down after someone dies. It has nothing to do with our efforts.

1 Peter 1:3–7 (NIV): Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is

revealed.

Let me mention one more thing on judgement. . .but also deals with the topic of rewards.

Matthew 7:22–23 (NIV): Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Notice what it said, I never knew you.

Here’s the thing with this Scripture. Their focus is entirely on what they did and not what Christ did.

They had the wrong foundation on which to build from. Here’s the thing church, its not about us, it’s about what Christ did.

So, what is the reward? Not a bigger crown, bigger mansion, or more bling to hang around your neck.



The Apostle Paul said it like this. . .

Philippians 3:8 (NLT): Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

Could it be your reward is eternity with Jesus. That sounds pretty good to me.

Religion tells us we'll be judged for our sins and collect rewards for our good deeds. God tells us that Jesus was punished for our sins and that knowing Jesus is our great reward.

One idea leads to walking on eggshells and doing good things to collect some heavenly bling. The other leads to a heart of gratefulness for God's grace as an ambition to know Jesus.

Which do you believe is the truth that sets you free?