

DOCTRINE OF REWARDS

1. DEFINITION:

- a. Rewards are given for specific meritorious work or service, sometimes given for service or a product which is above and beyond the normal or expected requirement.
- b. Biblically, rewards are given to believers who maximize the use of God's word and under the filling of the Holy Spirit produce a special quality of *fruit*, divine production. (John 15:2, 5, 8, 16; cf. Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9)

2. VOCABULARY:

- a. עֵקֶב - 'eqev – (Hebrew noun) – the latter end, wage, reward (Psa. 19:11)
- b. שָׂכָר - sakar – (Heb. n.) – wages, reward (Prov.11:18; Isa. 40:10; 62:11)
- c. στέφανος - stephanos – (Greek. n.) – wreath, prize, reward, crown (James 1:12)

3. THE BASIS FOR OUR REWARDS:

- a. Only those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ may qualify for rewards at the “**judgment seat of Christ,**” the *βῆμα* (bema-Greek noun). (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:1, 6, 7-11; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- b. Any believer who advances toward spiritual maturity may receive special rewards, in addition to his basic inheritance of eternal life and a resurrection body. (1 Cor. 3:12-14)

4. REWARDS FOR OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS:

- a. There are apparently rewards given for Old Testament believers but they are not spelled out as are those for the church age believers. (Psalm 19:11; Prov.11:18; Isa. 40:10; 62:11)
- b. These rewards will be given at the second advent. (Rev. 11:18)

5. SPECIAL REWARDS ARE GIVEN FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE:

(In addition to the inheritance guaranteed to every believer, there are special rewards given for spiritual production during the Christian life.)

- a. **Wreath of life** – for persevering under testing, for courage under suffering, for enduring false persecution, for being faithful unto death. (James 1:12; Heb. 10:32-36; Matt. 5:10-12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11)
- b. **Wreath of righteousness** – for fighting the good fight, finishing the course, keeping the faith, loving His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)
- c. **Wreath of rejoicing** – for winning souls to salvation (1 Thess. 2:19-20; Phil 4:1)
- d. **Wreath of glory** – for those who shepherd the flock well. (1 Pet. 5:1-4)
- e. **Incorruptible wreath** – for those who strive in all things with self-control, and mastery of the old sin nature (1 Cor. 9:25-27)
- f. **The “Order of the Morning Star”** (possibly) – for those who are given rulership over the nations during the millennial kingdom, for overcomers. (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-28; Rom. 12:21; Luke 19:10-27)

6. **EVALUATION OF BELIEVERS WORK FOR THESE SPECIAL REWARDS:**

- a. We all must appear before the “**judgment seat of Christ,**” at the time of the rapture of the church. (Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10)
- b. Each man’s work (Christian production) will become evident and be evaluated at the “**judgment seat of Christ.**” (1 Cor. 3:13, 14:4-5)
- c. Production that is unsatisfactory will not receive a reward but will be discarded. Paul uses the metaphor of refining metal in the smelting process to remove any impurities and obtain the pure metal to illustrate this evaluation process. “*If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.*” (1 Cor. 3:15)

7. **WARNING TO BELIEVERS CONCERNING REWARDS:**

- a. Believers can suffer loss of rewards for unsatisfactory production. (1 Cor. 3:15)
- b. Believers who deny the Lord will be denied reward. (2 Tim. 2:12b)
- c. Believers can be defrauded of rewards by false humility, worshiping angels, following false doctrine, and being consumed by pride. (Col. 2:18)
- d. Believers can receive potentially less than a full reward. (2 John 8)

8. **THE GREAT PROMISE OF REWARDS:**

- a. “*Behold, the Lord God (Jehovah) will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him, and His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.*” (Isa. 40:10; Isa. 62:11)
- b. Jesus will come in the glory of His Father and will recompense every man according to his deeds. (Matt. 16:27)
- c. Jesus said, “*Behold I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me to render to every man according to what he has done.*” (Rev. 2:23b, c)
- d. If any man’s work which he has built upon it (the foundation, Christ) remains he shall receive a reward. (1 Cor. 3:14)

9. **WORSHIP INVOLVING REWARDS:**

- a. There are *twenty-four elders* who are apparently representatives of the church age believers. (Rev. 4:2-4; cf. Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; Rev. 3:21;)
- b. The *twenty-four elders* cast their *rewards* (στέφανους - stephanuos) at the feet of Jesus as part of the victorious worship celebration in heaven after the rapture of the church. (Rev. 4:9-11; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4)

10. **GENERAL REFERENCES TO REWARDS:**

- a. There is great reward for suffering false accusation. (Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23)
- b. There is reward for charity without fanfare. (Matt. 6:1-4)
- c. There is reward for praying privately. (Matt. 6:5, 6)
- d. There is reward for private fasting. (Matt. 6:16-18)
- e. There are equal rewards for sharing in the ministries of others. (Matt. 10:41)
- f. There is a reward for kindness done in Jesus’ name. (Matt. 10:42; Mark 9:41)

- g. There is a reward for showing kindness to your enemies. (Luke 6:35)
- h. There are rewards for both those who plant (presenting the gospel) and those who water (teaching so as to cause spiritual growth). (1 Cor. 3:8)
- i. There is a reward for willing service. (1 Cor. 9:17)
- j. There is reward for those doing mundane things from the soul as for the Lord and not for men. (Col. 3:23)
- k. There is great reward for not casting away your confidence in Jesus. (Heb. 11:35)
- l. There is reward for suffering the reproach of Christ rather than riches. (Heb. 11:24-26) [Moses is the example.]