Doctrine of Rewards

Introduction

A prominent doctrine of the New Testament concerns the Doctrine of Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is a doctrine often ignored or, when taught, it is misrepresented because of the term “judgment” that is used in translating the Greek text. As will be shown below, though it is tremendously serious with eternal ramifications, the Judgment Seat of Christ is not a place and time when the Lord will mete out punishment for sins committed by the child of God. Rather, it is a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how a believer has lived his life for the Lord. 1 Cor 3:1-15, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

In 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, the Apostle Paul drew courage and was motivated by the fact of rewards at the return of the Lord for the church which he mentions in every chapter in this epistle and which becomes the primary subject of 2 Thessalonians. The Lord’s return and what this means, not only to the world but to us individually, is a very prominent subject of the New Testament. 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? 20 For you are
our glory and joy. It is significant that among the final words of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we find these words of the Lord: “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12). While salvation is a gift, there are rewards given for faithfulness in the Christian life as well as the loss of rewards for unfaithfulness.

Rewards become one of the great motivations of the Christian’s life or should. But we need to understand the nature of these rewards in order to understand the nature of the motivation. Some people are troubled by the doctrine of rewards because this seems to suggest “merit” instead of “grace,” and because, it is pointed out, we should only serve the Lord out of love and for God’s glory. Of course we should serve the Lord out of love and for God’s glory, and understanding the nature of rewards will help us do that. But the fact still remains that the Bible promises us rewards.

God gives us salvation. It is a gift through faith, but He rewards us for good works. God graciously supplies the means by which we may serve Him. Indeed, He works in us both to will and to do as we volitionally appropriate His grace, but the decision to serve, and the diligence employed in doing so, are our responsibility and contribution, and God sees this as rewardable. Philippians 2:12-13, “Therefore, my virtuously loved ones, in the same manner that all of you have consistently obeyed, not only when in my presence, but now, much more in my absence, you yourselves continue executing your own spiritual life by means of respect (for God) and with trembling. Since God (the Holy Spirit) is the One producing in all of you not only the determination but also the (resultant) production for the attainment of the grace purpose (of God the Father in eternity past).” 1 Cor 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” Col 1:28-29, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” 2 Cor 5:9-10, “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 1 John 2:28, “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.” Rev 3:11-12, “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of
heaven from My God, and My new name.” Rom 14:10-12, “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, ‘AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.’ So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”

Both Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 speak of the “judgment seat.” “Judgment Seat” is the noun bema. While Bema is used in the gospels and Acts of the raised platform where a Roman magistrate or ruler sat to make decisions and pass sentence, its use in the epistles of Paul is more in keeping with its original use among the Greeks because of his many allusions to the Greek athletic contests. Romans 14:10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. 2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

This word was taken from Isthmian games where the contestants would compete for the prize under the careful scrutiny of judges who would make sure that every rule of the contest was obeyed. The victor of a given event who participated according the rules was led by the judge to the platform called the Bema. There the laurel wreath was placed on his head as a symbol of victory. 2 Timothy 2:5 And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

In all of these passages … Paul was picturing the believer as a competitor in a spiritual contest. As the victorious Grecian athlete appeared before the Bema to receive his perishable award, so the Christian will appear before before Christ’s Bema to receive his imperishable award. The judge at the Bema bestowed rewards to the victors. He did not whip the losers. In other words, it is a reward seat and portrays a time of rewards or loss of rewards following examination. But it is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins. Such would be inconsistent with the finished work of Christ on the cross because He totally paid the penalty for our sins.

Chafer and Walvoord have an excellent word on this view: “With reference to sin, Scripture teaches that the child of God under grace shall not come into judgment (John 3:18; 5:24; 6:37; Rom. 5:1; 8:1; 1 Cor. 11:32); in his standing before God, and on the ground that the penalty for all sin—past, present, and future
(Col. 2:13)—has been borne by Christ as the perfect Substitute, the believer is not only placed beyond condemnation, but being in Christ is accepted in the perfection of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:6; Col. 2:10; Heb. 10:14) and loved of God as Christ is loved (John 17:23).”

Again, Chafer writes concerning the Bema, “It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the judgment is unrelated to the problem of sin, that it is more for the bestowing of rewards than the rejection of failure.”

Vocabulary

- *Tes dikaiosunes stephanos*, “the crown of righteousness.”
- *Ton amarntinon tes doxes stephanon*, “the incorruptible crown of glory.”
- *Ton stephano tes zoes*, “the crown of life.”
- *Stephanos kaucheseos*, “the crown of rejoicing.”
- *Stephanos* (noun), “wreath, crown, reward”
- *Brebeion* (noun), “prize, award”
- *Diadema* (noun), “diadem, crown”

2 Tim 4:8, “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” The “crown of righteousness” is symbolic of the righteous life Paul lived meaning he was faithfully obedient to the Word of God throughout his post-salvation experience. It is like the soldier’s medal for valor in the face of battle and the medal does not contain valor but it does declare that its possessor is valorous.

1 Peter 5:1-4, “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

“The unfading crown of glory” refers to the fact that Christ will bestow special recognition upon those who have labored faithfully to care for and disciple other Christians. This passage refers to the fact that faithful pastors who fed their flock the Word of God will be honored by the Lord Jesus Christ.

James 1:12, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Rev 2:10, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer.
Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” “The crown of life” refers to those who are martyred in the cause of Christ.

1 Thess 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.” “Crown of exultation or rejoicing” consists in the people whom we have led to Christ.

Faithful Servants

The notion that the future kingdom is a kind of classless society where are equal and rewarded equally has contributed in no small way to the laziness witnessed in the lives of many Christians in the 20th and here in the 21st century. Many have subconsciously reasoned that, since all are equal, my life has no particular eternal significance. In the final analysis my and your life will be rewarded as much as those who labored more diligently. This is a lie from the kingdom of darkness for the Scriptures teach that your words and your actions in time will determine your rank in the Millennium and on into eternity. There will be distinctions in heaven and God does show partiality but He is, however, justly partial. Matt 5:19, “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” We must be faithful to use the gifts that we have been given that are designed to serve the Lord and the body of Christ.

Luke 19:11-27, “While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. "And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, "Do business with this until I come back." "But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. The first appeared, saying, "Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, "Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' The second came, saying, "Your mina, master, has made five minas.' And he said to him also, "And you are to be over five cities.' Another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief;
for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, "By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?" Then he said to the bystanders, "Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas already.' I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."

We must become servants now in order to become great in the kingdom of God. Luke 22:24-26, “And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

We must be faithful when undergoing undeserved suffering in order to become great in the kingdom of God and to receive our inheritance. 2 Thess 1:4-5, “Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.” 2 Cor 4:17-18, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 1 Peter 4:12-14, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

So we must not fall in love with the things of this world and pursue the riches of this world but rather pursue riches in heaven meaning live your life now with a view to receiving these rewards from the Lord. Matt 6:19-21, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We are commanded in Scripture to do things which will result in enlarging our eternal storehouse with what they send ahead. 1 Tim 6:17-19, ‘Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.” Luke 12:32-34, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We must make sacrifices for the sake of the kingdom of God in order to receive rewards at the Bema Seat. Matt 19:27-30, “Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us? And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last; and the last, first."

We must give to those in need. Matt 6:1-4, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

Eternal Inheritance Analogous to an Escrow Account

Every church age believer has the opportunity to receive his eternal inheritance if he fulfills the condition of being faithful till death or the rapture whichever comes first and thus executes the Father’s will for his life. Both the Old and New Testament’s speak of an inheritance which could be forfeited due to unfaithfulness.

The inheritance in the Bible: (1) Related to God’s plan for the believer after salvation. (2) Added blessings to the Saved (i.e. Rewards on top of salvation). (3)
Possession. (4) Is meritorious ownership of the kingdom (i.e. Millennium and eternal state) (5) Conditioned on faithful obedience to the will of God. (6) Can be forfeited through habitual disobedience to the will of God. (7) 2 Types of inheritance (God and the possession of land in the Millennium) (Every believer receives God has His inheritance).

Salvation is non-meritorious. Eph 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.” Titus 3:5-7, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Although the believer’s salvation cannot be merited but is received when a person expresses faith alone in Christ alone, the believer’s inheritance on the other hand is meritorious meaning he has to fulfill the condition of being faithfully obedient to the will of God till physical death or the rapture (i.e. resurrection of the Church). Because the Church Age believer can forfeit his eternal inheritance through unfaithfulness to the Lord, there are many warnings regarding being unfaithful. Heb 10:35-39, “Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”

The believer is promised that if he fulfills the condition of being faithful till death, he will be given the privilege to reign with Christ. Romans 8:16-18, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our human spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Gal 5:19-21, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who habitually practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Eph 5:5-10, “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or
covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” 1 Cor 6:9-10, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” Heb 12:12-17, “Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.”

Eph 1:3, “Worthy of praise and glorification is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

God’s plan for blessing the believer may be compared to an escrow contract. An escrow is a deed, bond or other agreement by which one person conveys some form of property to another person. Rather than being conveyed directly, however, the property is deposited with a third party, to be delivered when the intended recipient fulfills certain conditions set forth in the terms of the escrow agreement. Just as an escrow agreement has three parties, so also Ephesians 1:3 mentions three parties: (1) God the Father is the Grantor, He’s the Giver. (2) Jesus Christ acts as a depository or escrow officer. (3) The believer is the grantee or the receiver. Every person who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is the grantee of blessings which stagger the imagination.

However, God in His infinite wisdom requires that capacity must precede the conveyance of these greater blessings. God designed the Plan of God to produce capacity which makes the distribution of blessings meaningful, enjoyable and glorifying God. The first thing that God ever did for us as believers is the means of glorifying Him. The first thing that God the Father ever did as the Grantor is deposit in Escrow greater blessings both time and eternity for every believer without exception. These greater blessings are based upon God’s grace policy
which says that God does all the work. God gave the believer a system so that deposit could be conveyed without compromising the essence and integrity of God. The believer who fulfills the condition of the escrow by faithfully executing God’s plan for his life in time and becomes a winner as a result will receive the conveyance of their Escrow Blessings for time and in eternity. The believer who does not fulfill the conditions of the escrow in time and does not reach spiritual maturity will not receive the conveyance of their Escrow Blessings for both time and eternity. The believer who does not fulfill the conditions of the escrow will have these greater blessings remain on deposit in heaven as a memorial to the justice of God. The only reason a believer’s escrow blessings are not delivered to him is that he fails to fulfill the conditions of the escrow agreement. The only condition is that the believer advance to spiritual maturity and execute God’s plan for their life. The loser’s escrow blessings belong to him irrevocably, but they will remain undistributed, on deposit forever as a memorial to lost opportunity and as a monument to the eternal bounty of God’s grace. While the believer cannot lose his salvation, he can lose the conveyance of escrow blessings for time and eternity. A treasury of blessings has your name on it and they are irrevocable, “imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away” (1 Pet. 1:4). The location of the deposit is “in the heavenlies” and the date of the deposit is “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3-6).

The term Escrow Blessings is an analogy based upon a Bible Doctrine describing what God the Father in eternity past did as the Grantor when He deposited greater blessings for both time and eternity for every believer with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Depository and Escrow Officer and the release of these blessings takes place when the believer fulfills the conditions of the Escrow Contract by being faithfully obedient to the will of God to death. God the Father as the Grantor has placed Himself under the legal obligation by an act of His sovereign will to provide unusual and fantastic blessings both temporal and eternal for the believer who fulfills the conditions of the escrow.

Eph 1:1-11, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom
and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

“We have obtained an inheritance” is the 1st person plural aorist passive indicative form of the verb kleroo, which is eklerothemen. The verb kleroo in the passive voice means “to receive an inheritance” from God the Father at the moment of salvation that is on deposit in heaven with the Person of Christ who will distribute this inheritance if the believer fulfills the conditions of the escrow which is execute the Father’s plan in time.

Ephesians 1:12-14, “to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation -- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

“Inheritance” is the noun kleronomia. Kleronomia means “possession, inheritance,” and refers to the believer’s escrow blessings.

Ephesians 1:15-23, “For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

These escrow blessings or in other words our eternal inheritance is mentioned in other places in the Scriptures. Col 1:9-12, “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to
please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.” Col 3:23-25, “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.” Heb 9:15, “For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” 1 Peter 1:3-5, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The Overcomer

The church age believer must be an overcomer in order to receive his eternal inheritance. This involves perseverance which by way of definition is steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state. The believer who perseveres is one who is faithfully obedient to the Word of God. He is persistent in executing the Father’s will for his life. Perseverance suggests activity maintained in spite of difficulties, steadfast and long continued application. It is remaining faithful and obedient to the Word of God despite the obstacles in life such as the old sin nature, self, the cosmic system of Satan.

Perseverance is being steadfast and faithful in applying the Word of God despite the many obstacles and cares of life in the cosmic system of Satan. It is being steadfast in picking up one’s cross daily and being willing to experience identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. This is why the Christian way of life is characterized as a race to be run (1 Co. 9:24; He. 12:1; 2 Ti. 4:7). It is also described in Scripture as a struggle or athletic contest to be fought (1 Th. 2:2; 1 Ti. 4:9; 6:12; 2 Ti. 2:5; He. 10:32). There are other terms such as labor or toil or work (1 Co. 3:8; 15:58; 2 Co. 11:27; 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8). The Word of God also characterizes the Christian way of life as testing or trials (Ja. 1:2-4; 1 Pe. 1:6; 4:12).
An overcomer is one who executes the Father’s plan for his life and overcomes the following: (1) Old sin nature (2) Cosmic system of Satan (3) Satan. *1 John 5:4*, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

*Rev 2:1-29*, “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place -- unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.' And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.' And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'
And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them -- I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 3:5, “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Revelation 3:12, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.” Revelation 3:21, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 21:7, “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

“He who overcomes” is the verb nikao. The verb nikao appears frequently in both classical and biblical Greek. It can be commonly found in reference to the winning of or prevailing in military conflicts, athletic contests and political or social causes. The verb nikao refers to being victorious after a struggle. Romans 12:12, “Rejoicing in confidence, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.” 2 Corinthians 4:17, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.” 1 Peter 2:19-20, “For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up
under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ‘Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered not threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him (the Father) who judges righteously.’” 1 Peter 3:14-17, “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed, ‘and do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,’ but set apart Christ as Lord in your right lobes, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the confidence that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.” 2 Tim 2:12-13, “If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.” 2 Tim 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

The apostle Paul employs a track and field metaphor in several passages in order to illustrate the fact that the believer needs to have endurance and persevere in order to receive a reward and his eternal inheritance. 1 Cor 9:22-27, “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

Just as the eye of the runner in the ancient athletic running events had to fix his eye on the square pillar that he must reach so must the believer fix his eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ who pioneered the spiritual life during His 1st Advent. The runner in the ancient track and field events would be disqualified if he broke the rules of training or the race itself and the same applies to the believer in the Church Age who does not adhere to the rules of the plan of God. 1 Cor 6:9-10, “Or do
you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor {the} covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” Gal 5:21, “envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Eph 5:5, “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Heb 12:1-3, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

The following rewards are the believer’s escrow blessings for eternity and they will be presented by the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation: “crown of righteousness” (Tes dikaiosunes stephanos): (1) This is given to the believer who executes the plan of God for the church age. (2) It represents a tremendous amount of privileges, blessings and opportunities in the eternal state. (3) Documentation: 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

“Crown of life” (Ton stephano tes zoes): (1) This is given for the believer who attains spiritual maturity. (2) It is awarded to the believer who passes Evidence Testing resulting in the maximum glorification of God in the Angelic Conflict. (3) Documentation: Revelation 2:10.

“Incorruptible crown of glory” (Ton amarntinon tes doxes stephanon): (1) This is given to the Pastor-Teacher who was faithful in communicating the mystery doctrine for the church age. (2) Documentation: 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 4:1.

“Order of the morning star”: (1) The conveyance of Escrow Blessings accompany this reward. (2) The believer is provided a translucent uniform of glory over the resurrection body. (3) Documentation: Revelation 3:4

“Crown of rejoicing” stephanos kaucheseos: (1) Soul winners crown. (2) Documentation: 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 4:1

The winner believer will receive a New Knighthood (Rev. 2:17). He will also receive a New Title in the Lamb’s book of life and will have a membership to the Paradise Club and access to the Gazebo in the Garden (Reve. 2:7, 14). The winner believer will have his name recorded in the historical record section of heaven
(Rev. 3:12). The “hidden manna” in Revelation 2:17 refers to the special intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity and will be given only to the overcomer or winner believer. Manna is called food from heaven (Ps. 78:24). In John 6:48-51 the Lord spoke of Himself as the true bread from heaven that gives eternal life in contrast with the manna of the OT. The new title on the white stone in Revelation 2:17 refers to the privilege of having intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity which will be exclusively to the overcomer. The winner believer will have his name recorded in the historical record section of heaven (Rev. 3:12). The winner believer will be acknowledged (*homologeo*) before God the Father in heaven by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 3:5). The winner believer will rule with Christ during the Millennium (Rom. 5:17; 8:14; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21).

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