



The Timing and Nature of the Christian's Reward, Part 1

Selected Scriptures

Why is a series on *future reward* necessary?

- To shed light on a neglected topic.
- To offer incentive for sacrificial service.
- To issue warning against apathy.
- To encourage appropriate self-examination.

I. The Timing of the Reward – *When?*

A. Christians will receive their rewards *at a specific event*.

- This event is *the Judgment Seat of Christ* (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10).
- This event is not to be confused with *the Great White Throne Judgment* of Revelation 20:11–12, which takes place *after* the millennial reign of Christ and includes only *the unsaved*.
- The Judgment Seat of Christ includes only *true Christians*.

“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.”

—**2 Corinthians 5:10**

“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**. . . . So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” —**Romans 14:10, 12**

- The similarity of the language in these texts leads to the conclusion that “the judgment seat of God” is the same as “the judgment seat of Christ.”

“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.” —**1 Corinthians 3:13–15**

- “**The day**” refers to a *specific day*, not a generic one (“a day”).
- This “**day**” is also different from “the day of the Lord” —which has a different focus and purpose.
- “**The fire**” refers not to *hell* or *purgatory*, but to a *momentary, refining fire* that reveals the quantity and quality of a believer’s works done for the glory of Christ.

“so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—1 Corinthians 1:6–7

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

—Philippians 1:6

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.” —Philippians 1:9–10

B. Christians will receive their rewards *together with the church*.

- This event isn't an individual appearance (such as at the moment of death), but a corporate appearance during which all who have ever been part of the church will be rewarded.

“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.” —**2 Timothy 4:8**

- Paul did not anticipate receiving his reward the moment he died, but on “that day” when others “who have loved His appearing” would receive their reward.

“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. . . . So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”

—**Romans 14:10, 12**

“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.”

—**2 Corinthians 5:10**

- When this event will happen, the *entire universal church* must be gathered for it.

“It cannot be a piecemeal examination when the Lord is conducting it. It must be when their earthly work is completed, and when the united family is there. Again we must repeat: the Judgment Seat of Christ is a family matter; not for a portion of the family, but the whole.”

—L. Sale-Harrison, *The Judgment Seat of Christ*, 36

C. Christians will receive their rewards *in their glorified bodies*.

- In the same way that the reward is based upon works the Christian has done *in the body*, so it will be enjoyed by Christians *in the body*.

“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.”

—2 Corinthians 5:10

- This necessitates that the reward is given *after* the resurrection of Christians from the dead, and the glorification of those Christians who remain alive at the coming of Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. —**1 Corinthians 15:58**

- The “therefore” points to the preceding paragraph (15:50–57), which describes the believer’s future resurrection.

“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.” —**1 Corinthians 15:50–53**

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

—1 Thessalonians 4:13–17

D. Christians will receive their rewards *before the future reign of Christ.*

- In fact, it is best to place the reception of reward *before* the Marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19:7–9), when the church—the bride of Christ—appears before Christ sincere and blameless.

“‘Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.’ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

—**Revelation 19:7–8**

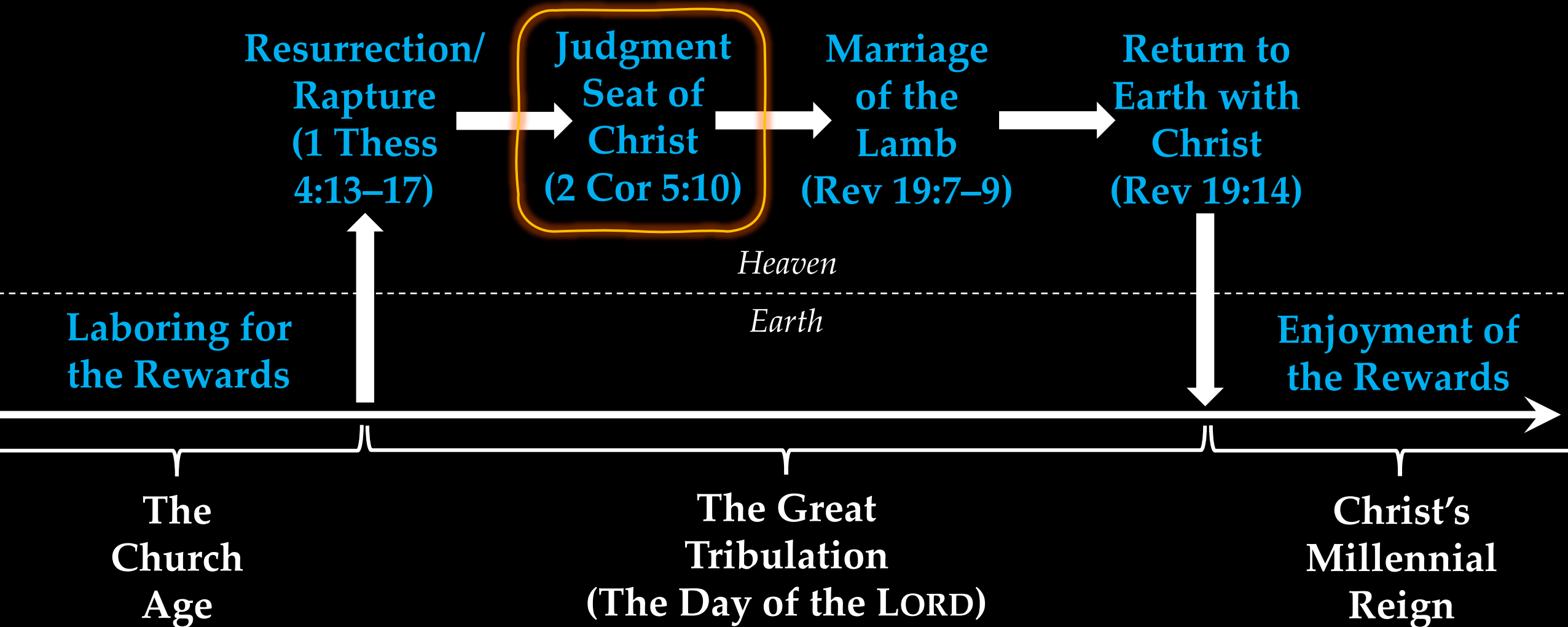
- It is immediately after the Marriage of the Lamb that the spotless bride of Christ accompanies Christ to earth, now as an army, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Rev 19:14).

- The returning Christ conquers His enemies, establishes His kingdom on earth, and gives to the members of His church responsibilities of co-regency.

“Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. . . . They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” —**Revelation 20:4, 6**

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.’”
—**Revelation 5:9–10**

The Timetable of the Christian's Reward



E. Christians will receive their rewards *imminently*.

- “Imminence” – something “can happen soon, at any moment.”
- Since the rapture and glorification of the church (1 Thess 4:13–17) can happen *imminently*, so too can our appearance before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for **the coming of the Lord is near.** Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, **the Judge is standing right at the door.**”

—James 5:7–9

THE TIMING OF THE CHRISTIAN'S REWARD

Christians will receive their rewards at a specific event.

Christians will receive their rewards together with the church.

Christians will receive their rewards in their glorified bodies.

Christians will receive their rewards before the reign of Christ.

Christians will receive their rewards imminently.

Implications

- 1) The judgment seat of Christ is inevitable and imminent.
- 2) The judgment seat of Christ need not be something to fear; strengthen your resolve and excel still more while it is still day.
- 3) God is a rewarder of sacrificial service and sanctified living when done for the glory of Christ.
- 4) The future enjoyment of the reward will more than compensate for present sacrifices.

