

Following Jesus to a Rewarding Life – part 1

Luke 6:22-23

I am going to be speaking to you about the so-called afterlife and in particular the rewards or the lack thereof that you are currently earning.

--For this sermon series I'm going to depending heavily on the information compiled by Bruce Wilkinson and placed within his little book entitled "A Life God Rewards."

We have seen that God's design for disciples is to bear much fruit

--What if told you that even the smallest decisions and actions you take now can affect your future Forever? Would that surprise you?

--Things like how you treat your boss or whom you invite out for dinner can carry eternal consequences?

--You may think that that is not necessarily true, but the New Testament and Jesus, in particular, plainly taught that **our actions now** will affect **our future forever**

Rev. 22:12; Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Tim. 4:8; Eph. 6:8

2. No one ever made more shocking statements about the Afterlife than Jesus of Nazareth.

He left people amazed, Dumbfounded and down-right angry when He spoke.

--Let's take a brief look at one of statements Jesus made about the afterlife and see what we can learn from it. **Luke 6:22-23**

--**First**, notice there is a direct connection between something you do or go through for Him here on earth and something "Great" He will do for you in Heaven.

--**Second**, notice that the reward is specifically and purposely yours if you behave in one way (don't avoid persecution) and specifically not yours if you behave in another (run from persecution).

--This promise of reward in Heaven, as we have seen, is not an isolated example of Jesus' teachings—He spoke on this subject often:

"He will reward each according to his works" **Mt. 16:27**

"You will have treasure in Heaven" **Mt. 19:21**

"You shall be repaid at the resurrection" **Lk. 14:13-14**

--The implications of these passages are enormous!

--They suggest that God is keeping track of what you do for Him every day!

--They suggest that you have more to gain by serving Him than possibly you have ever imagined!

3. Let's start with the basics and construct a ground work that we can build on.

The Bible teaches us that there are two keys that determine everything about our eternity:

1. First key is belief: What you believe determines your eternal Destination
Jn. 3:36, Jn. 3:16; Acts 16:31

2. Second key is behavior: This is the key that unlocks the door to rewards. **How** you spend your everlasting life is determined by your behavior.

--**Belief determines your eternal destination.**

--**Behavior determines your eternal compensation.**

--**Eternal life** is not compensation but a free gift. **Rom. 6:23**

4. We'll spend the rest of our time by looking at a timeline of our eternity.

This timeline contains **5 events that will happen in your future** no matter what you believe or how you behave. Jesus spoke quite often about these events.

1. First event is your Life: You are born and are here for a purpose; and though you didn't exist in the past (and whether or not you fulfill that purpose) you will exist forever in the future.

2. The second event in your forever life is your Death:

--Birth was your quick entrance and death will be your quick exit, but you (since you are more than physical) will continue to exist.

--Jesus taught that after death our soul is either instantly with God in Heaven or instantly in a place of torment away from God based on *what we've believed in this life.*

3. The third event in our forever life is our Resurrection:

--Something that is true for everyone, Christian or not, is that all will receive a bodily resurrection. **Jn. 5:28-29**

4. The fourth event is your Repayment:

Believers and nonbelievers will be judged by Jesus Christ at two separate events:

1. **Bema seat**—where believers will either be rewarded or suffer loss.

--Bema is an important word for believers; it was the place where a judge determined how you ran a race. **II Cor. 5:10; Romans 14:10**

2. **Great white Throne**—where nonbelievers will be judged by their deeds before being thrown into Hell.

--The outcome of those judgments will determine either your degree of reward in Heaven or your degree of retribution in Hell.

--Yes, there are degrees of retribution in Hell just like there will be degrees of reward in Heaven.

5. The fifth event in our forever life is forever life:

Jesus taught eternal existence awaits everyone

--Those who have rejected Him “will go away into ever lasting punishment” **Mt. 25:46**

--Those who have chosen Him will experience eternal life in God's presence.

--Really, humans in this life talking about the eternal state is sort of like tadpoles swapping stories about blue whales or

--one twin inside the womb trying to convince the other about what life on the outside will be like.

--But Jesus is the only person who came from eternity to earth and then went back into eternity.

--He knows the whole truth past, present, and future and gives us a one-of-a-kind perspective.

--He sees this exact moment in your life from a point far out in the infinite future and tell you exactly how to prepare for what is to come.

How foolish would it be for us not to listen to Him?