

Rewarded With What?

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I just wrapped up a wonderfully tiring baseball season helping coach my three oldest sons' teams. Just yesterday we had a team party where the Pinto Pirates celebrated winning first place! Each and every one of those 11 players worked hard, contributed, and got to celebrate being on the championship team. There were, however, four players who received very specific awards. MVP, Most Improved, Gold Glove, and Sportsmanship awards. These players went above and beyond in their work, attitude, and performance, and as a result, they were recognized and celebrated by the coaches, their team, and their families. In some way, I think that this can help us understand how the Lord Jesus will treat us at his judgment (Bema) seat, and in the millennial kingdom. All who have faith in Jesus are his children and have been made right with God our Father, by His grace alone. This is the most incredible gift ever given and all who are justified will rejoice in what is to come. Yet, there are those believers who have gone "above and beyond" in their kingdom work, attitude, and service, and they will be recognized and rewarded based upon their faithfulness. Last week we looked at three areas we will be judged by: ***Did we serve? Did we suffer? Did we shepherd?*** Today in our study we will see what the scriptures reveal about ***what*** we will be rewarded with. I am sure there will be many joyous and unexpected rewards as well, but the scriptures do give us glimpses of some of what awaits faithful followers of Jesus.

Crowns

The scriptures use the image of a crown (stephanos or wreath) as one of the rewards that awaits faithful believers. As we have learned, this type of crown is not a kings crown, but rather the wreath like crown awarded those who won in the public games. The image is used in a couple different ways. Paul seems to use it figuratively in Philippians 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19, as he thinks of his beloved brothers and sisters in Philippi and Thessalonica. Like an athlete taking glory in the crown he has just won, Paul took glory in those he had the joy of leading to the Lord Jesus, and looked forward to the day he would find an even greater glory when they would all see the resurrected Jesus together. Those Paul had evangelized and disciplined were a great source of joy and reward for him both while he lived, and as he looked forward to the future.

The crowns also seem to have a literal meaning in some places. These crowns will be rewarded specifically to believers who have proved themselves to be worthy of these rewards in various ways. In 2 Timothy 4:8 "The Crown of Righteousness" is promised to Paul and "all who have loved his (Jesus') appearing" as a reward for believers who live righteously till the very end of their lives. In James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 "The Crown of Life" is promised to those who show their love for God by faithfully enduring various trials and persecutions. In 1 Peter 5:4 "The Crown of Glory" is promised to those who faithfully serve the church as shepherd Elders.

Authority and Responsibility

Another category of rewards that will be given to faithful believers is that of authority. There are numerous passages¹ that talk about faithful believers reigning and ruling and judging with Christ. As we have studied already, it would seem like this will be awarded during the literal reign of Jesus on this earth during the millennial kingdom. When Jesus returns to establish his kingdom, the earth will have been ravaged with war and judgment during the period known as the great tribulation. Jesus and his followers will be setting to the task of restoring what had been destroyed, bringing peace and righteousness, establishing the Law of Messiah across the earth, and rebuilding needed infrastructure. Just picture the great city of Berlin after the devastation of World War II. It was an absolute ruined city. Yet, if you were to visit it now, you would find it even more beautiful than before! How does that happen? It takes vision, leadership, manpower and infrastructure etc. I think that helps to give us a picture of what we will be set about doing when Jesus Christ returns to the earth to set up His kingdom.

There is one last aspect of these rewards I want to think about. The degree to which we are faithful now, is the degree to which we will be rewarded later. Not all believers are equally dedicated to God's kingdom business here on the earth. There are those who are straining toward Christlikeness, seeking to serve, suffer and shepherd. There are also those who are content to enjoy the many blessings of being a believers, but aren't as concerned with God's kingdom business. It seems very reasonable to me, that those who are seeking to faithfully honor Christ with their lives now, will have proven themselves to be worthy of greater responsibility and honor when Jesus is establishing the kingdom of God in its fullness here on earth. May we strive to be those who honor Jesus in this life, and are richly rewarded by Jesus in His coming Kingdom.

Women's Tea: June 25th @ 11:00 am

Sign up at the Women's Kiosk on the patio.

Children's Ministry Volunteers Needed!

See Billie Phipps out on the patio.

¹ Matt. 19:28-30; Luke 22:30; Rev. 2:26, 3:21, 5:9-10, 20:4; Dan 7:27; 1 Cor 6:2-3;