

Treasure in Heaven

When we are saved the Lord Jesus Christ commands all of us to give our life to Him. He calls us to sacrifice who we are and what we want in order to become His servant. That means dedicating ourselves to doing His will, bringing Him glory, and building His kingdom. God wants to have *all* of your heart, *all* of your passion, and *all* of your energy. He literally wants you to live for Him!

Living for Christ means a complete change in the way we think. It impacts our priorities, our desires, our dreams, and our ambitions. It's a complete lifestyle change that turns upside down who we are and what we do.

For example, in this life there are some people who spend a great deal of time getting as many possessions as they possibly can. No matter how much they own, some people want even more. Those who have thousands of dollars want millions of dollars; those who have millions want billions; and those who have billions want billions more.

There are some people who have responded to this by teaching that Christians should take a vow of poverty. They claim that since Jesus was poor we ought to be poor as well. That may sound very spiritual but it's not Biblical. For example, God gave Abraham an incredible amount of wealth. When Lot was carried away captive by an invading army, Abraham armed 318 of his servants so that he could defeat the army and rescue his nephew (Genesis 14:1-14). You've got to be pretty well off if you have more than 300 servants!

God also gave David an enormous amount of wealth. David was so rich that he was able to donate *billions* of dollars worth of silver, gold, and other materials to build the temple (1 Chronicles 22:14). God gave Solomon a *staggering* amount of wealth – not because he asked for it but just because God wanted to bless him with it (2 Chronicles 1:11-12). The Lord never chastised any of these people for being wealthy. *Having money is*

not a sin.

Jesus had a lot to say about the subject of money but He never condemned wealth. What He taught was very interesting. Jesus commanded us to **lay up our treasures in Heaven:**

Matthew 6:19-21: “Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

There's a lot of important points in these verses and I'd like to take some time to explore them.

First of all, notice that Jesus doesn't prohibit the accumulation of treasure. Jesus had no problem with people storing up wealth. He could easily have said that it's a sin to lay up treasure but He didn't. Instead He commanded us to lay up our treasures in Heaven instead of in this world.

Now, this verse tends to get spiritualized quite a bit. Some people read this and assume it's talking about spiritual blessings. They interpret these verses to mean that if we work for God then He will bless us spiritually. That may sound plausible but it's *not* what that verse means.

Stop and think about it for a moment. Jesus said that if we store our treasures on Earth they're subject to decay and might be stolen. However, if we store them up in Heaven then they can't be stolen and will last forever. These statements make a lot of sense if they're talking about physical treasure, but they make *no sense at all* if they're talking about spiritual blessings! It's *impossible* for moths to eat your spiritual blessings or for a thief to steal them. Take a moment to think about the various spiritual blessings which God has given you. For example, God has promised us eternal security in Christ; can a moth eat that? God has promised

to always be with us and never forsake us; can a burglar steal that while we're away on vacation? Of course not! The only things that moths can eat and thieves can steal are *physical goods*. Christ is saying exactly what He seems to be saying: we should relocate our physical goods to Heaven so they can't be stolen.

I realize this may sound crazy but that's because many people have an unbiblical view of Heaven. When some people think of Heaven they picture a big white place with lots of clouds and harps, where people spend eternity strumming their harp and not really doing much else. That picture of Heaven is *not remotely Biblical*. The Heaven that the Bible describes is completely different! The Bible has far more to say about Heaven than we realize, and it's a shame that some Christians get most of their ideas about Heaven from Hollywood.

First of all, Heaven isn't a vague place with clouds. The Bible tells us that ***Heaven is a city***:

Hebrews 11:16: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

What has God prepared for us? A *city*. Notice that it doesn't say “a cloud”! We're *not* going to spend eternity floating around on a cloud somewhere; instead we're going to spend it living *in a city*. Revelation 21 and 22 spend a lot of time describing this Heavenly city, which the Bible calls “the New Jerusalem”. This incredibly large city has trees, and streets, and a stream, and walls, and food, and God Himself.

All of us know quite a bit about cities. Most people have spent their lives either living in a city or near one. One of the things we know about cities is that they have places for people to live, and the New Jerusalem is no different. The Bible tells us exactly what we can expect as far as living accommodations go:

John 14:2: “In my Father's house are many

mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

I realize that a lot of modern Bible translations have rendered this verse as “many rooms” – and I believe that's a serious mistake¹. Jesus is *not* talking about rooms here! He's not saying “When you get to Heaven I've got a spare closet you can spend eternity living in.” The New Jerusalem is full of *homes*. It's an enormous city that covers more than *2 million square miles* (Revelation 21:16-17). God's not hurting for space and He doesn't have to stuff all of us in closets to make room for everyone. I don't think our home on Earth, no matter how nice it might be, can remotely compare to what God Himself has spent *two thousand years* preparing for us.

When we reach our heavenly home I don't think we're going to be given an empty building. We're not going to spend eternity wishing we had a chair to sit on. In this world our houses are furnished, and I believe that will also be true in the world to come. Physical goods aren't evil! If they were then Jesus wouldn't have commanded us to accumulate them in Heaven.

In Heaven we will have a place to live. Jesus is telling us that we should take the possessions we have in this life and transfer them to Heaven so that we'll still have them when we get there. It's true you can't take your possessions with you when you die but you *can* send them on ahead.

I'm not saying there's a magical way you can mail your baseball card collection to Heaven so you can have it in the ages to come. You can't take your favorite shirt and mail it to the New Jerusalem. However, there *are* ways you can use your world possessions to lay up real, actual treasures in your Heavenly home.

There are some people who claim there's no such thing as treasure in Heaven because in in that realm everyone is equal and

¹ For a detailed look at mansions in Heaven, see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Mansions-in-Heaven.pdf>

everyone has exactly the same thing. They reject the idea that some people in Heaven might have more goods than others, or that some people might have a higher status than others. This belief is common but it's not Biblical. 1 Corinthians 3 says this:

1 Corinthians 3:11-15: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

This passage teaches us that every man's work will be tested and anything that doesn't pass the test will be lost. A reward will be given to some people but not to others!

You see, *God cares how we spend our lives* and He will reward us accordingly. God isn't going to say “Bob spent his life faithfully serving me while Fred spent his days lying drunk on the floor. I'm going to give them both the same reward because I don't care how they spent their time.” As Paul explains, people who wasted their lives will still be saved but they will “suffer loss”. They will attain eternal life but will receive no reward. However, those who faithfully served God *will* be rewarded. The idea that “everyone will have the same thing” isn't Biblical.

Giving To The Poor

How do you lay up treasure in Heaven? Well, one way is to **give to the poor**:

Matthew 19:21: “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”

Luke 12:31-34: “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Jesus taught that if we give to the poor then we will have treasure in Heaven. Jesus didn't say that we might have treasure in Heaven, but that we *will*. This is a guaranteed way of transferring your treasures from this life into the next. If you give to the poor then God will give you “bags which wax not old” – a treasure in the heavens that doesn't fail. There are many ways we can give to the poor in the name of Christ! If you're interested in doing this (and you should be) you don't have to look very hard for opportunities.

I want to point out one more time that Christ describes Heavenly treasure as something that's *real and tangible*. He describes about bags that don't wear out and goods that aren't eaten by moths. If He was talking spiritual blessings He could easily have said “Seek the kingdom of God and you will be drawn closer to Him, which is your reward.” However, that's *not* what He said! Instead He talked as if the treasure was some type of physical good that would ordinarily be subject to wear and tear.

Persecution

Another key way to amass Heavenly treasure is **to be persecuted for serving God**:

Matthew 5:11-12: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Luke 6:22-23: “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”

If you're persecuted and suffer for the sake of Christ then you'll be rewarded. In fact, your reward in Heaven will be *great!* Keep in mind that *Jesus*, the creator of the Universe, is the one who's saying “Your reward will be truly astonishing.” God is saying that your reward for suffering for Him will be so amazing and mind-blowing that you should be leaping for joy.

Some Christians believe that rewards are somehow unspiritual or bad. They claim that even desiring a reward in the first place is a sign of immaturity. I want to point out that the person who commanded us to desire these rewards and get excited over them is actually *Jesus Himself* – and He said this not once, but *twice!* He wants us to be excited about what He's going to give us.

This shouldn't surprise us. After all, how would you feel if you gave a present to someone and found out they weren't excited

about it, didn't particularly want it, and were bored with the whole thing? Isn't it better when you give a gift to someone who you *know* going to enjoy and appreciate it? Do you really want to give someone a gift just to hear them say that they don't want it because they're too spiritual to care about gifts? Of course not – and God doesn't want that either. God is going to give us something amazing and He doesn't want us to spend our lives saying that we don't want it. That attitude doesn't honor God.

Helping Other Christians

We've talked about amassing Heavenly treasure by giving to the poor and by being persecuted for following Christ. There are two other ways to amass Heavenly treasure and that's by receiving the servants of God as who they are, and by helping others in the name of God:

Matthew 10:40-42: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

This isn't as difficult as you might think. As the world becomes a more wicked place it will pressure us to distance ourselves from people who are the faithful servants of God. When the prophets were alive the world hated them, refused to hear what they had to say, and put them to death. Those who supported the prophets were doing something daring and God promised to reward them for it. Likewise, when we refuse to join with the

world and instead stand by the faithful people of God, the Lord will reward us.

Helping other people in the name of God will result in a Heavenly reward. Giving a cup of water in the name of Christ is not as hard as it seems. There are reputable charities that have programs where they give water filters to families and villages that provides them with a clean and disease-free source of water – and they do so in the name of Christ, and use it as an opportunity to share the gospel. That filter can provide a *lifetime* of clean water for a family that otherwise wouldn't have access to it. If we're willing to act to help those in need there's a lot that we can do.

Crowns

Now that we've spent some time discussing *how* you amass rewards I'd like to talk about an entirely different type of rewards. The Bible tells us it's possible to earn certain types of crowns. These crowns aren't crowns of authority but crowns of victory. The Bible refers to them as **incorruptible crowns**:

I Corinthians 9:24-27: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

As you can see, you have to *earn* these crowns. Some people will get them and some people won't. Paul urges us to run the race faithfully and discipline ourselves so that when we're

judged we won't come away empty-handed. If you want an incorruptible crown then you're going to have to work for it.

God puts a difference between Christians who faithfully live for Him and Christians who don't. Those who serve Him will be rewarded, and those who couldn't be bothered to do so will receive no crown. The way that we live our lives, and the choices that we make, really does matter.

One of the crowns that we can earn is the **crown of righteousness**:

2 Timothy 4:7-8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth is laid up for me a **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

This crown is an easy one to earn. All you have to do is long for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ! Those who are looking forward to the rapture and eagerly want Jesus to return will be given the crown of righteousness. That's all you have to do.

The sad truth is that if Jesus were to return today there wouldn't be very many people who would receive this crown. There are many Christians who don't want Jesus to come back anytime soon because if He did that would interfere with their plans. They want Jesus to stay away until they've accomplished everything they want to do. If God were to send us a message saying that He would return at noon tomorrow, many Christians would be very upset because that would interrupt their plans! The things of the world have so ensnared them that they see the return of Christ as a threat, not a source of glorious hope.

That's a terrible attitude to have. Imagine a bride telling her groom "No, I really don't want to marry you just yet. I've got a life to live, and things to do, and dreams to accomplish, and

you're a hindrance to all that. You need to stay away until I'm finished having my fun." No groom is going to be happy hearing that message from his bride – and Christ doesn't want to hear it from us either. Jesus wants us to earnestly desire His return and to wish each day that perhaps today would be the day He would finally come for us.

Think of it this way. Is your life, your dreams, and your desires really more important than the rapture, the *raising of the dead*, and the translation of all saints into incorruptible immortals? Is your life really more important than all of that? Do you really want Christ to delay coming back and rescuing all the Christians who are being persecuted, tortured, and executed just so you can finish your plans?

Those who long for the return of Christ will receive the crown of righteousness. Those who don't want Him to return, or who are indifferent about it, will not be given that crown.

Another type of crown is the **crown of life**:

James 1:12: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Revelation 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The crown of life is given to those who *endure temptation*. Christ wants us to love Him, and the way we show our love for Him is by keeping His commandments (John 14:15). This means those who keep His commandments prove that they really do love Him! Those who endure temptation and defeat it, choosing to walk in the ways of God instead of the ways of the flesh, will be

given the crown of life.

The way that you live your life *matters*. There are consequences for continuing to live a life of sin. God puts a difference between those who overcome sin and those who are indifferent about living a life of holiness.

Peter speaks of the third type of crown – the **crown of glory**:

I Peter 5:1-4: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

This crown is given to church leaders who faithfully and selflessly take care of their congregations, which means the only people who are eligible to receive it are preachers, evangelists, and elders. The crown of glory will be given to those who were good examples, who preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), who took care of their flocks, and who served not for wealth or power but out of sincere love. On the other hand, those who were faithless, who set a terrible example, who preached heresy, or who abused their flock will lose it. Once again we see that God really does care about how you live your life.

Some people will receive these crowns while others will go away empty-handed. Jesus said that we must be careful because these crowns *can* be lost:

Revelation 3:11: “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy

crown."

Our salvation can't be lost and eternal life can't be lost, so Christ isn't talking about either of those. What *can* be lost are our crowns because they're rewards for a life well-lived. That puts crowns in a different category from other Heavenly treasure. If you give to the poor then God will reward you, and that reward can't be lost no matter what. Crowns, though, are trickier to earn because they can only be gained by a lifetime of faithful service. They're harder to get, and it's quite possible that few people will obtain them.

The idea of being rewarded for our faithful service to God may make some people uncomfortable, but *this is Christ's idea*, not our own! God isn't doing something wrong by generously rewarding His people.

Casting Our Crowns Before God

In this world people earn Heavenly rewards by faithfully serving God. In Heaven people will take their rewards and use them to bring glory and honor to God:

Revelation 4:9-11: "And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

What are these people in Heaven doing with their crowns? They're casting them before the throne of God and worshipping Him! Since the Lord had rewarded them, they're using their

rewards to worship the Father.

Which brings us back to the beginning God wants us to use the possessions He's given us to honor Him. When we do that – when we give to the poor, help others in the name of Christ, or suffer for His name – then God has promised to reward us. Once we reach Heaven and receive the rewards that God chose to give us, we'll use them to glorify God – which is how we got them in the first place.

So spend your life serving God. Lay up your treasure in Heaven. Provide for yourself bags that do not wax old, and an incorruptible crown that does not fade away – so that when the day comes you can honor the Lord and glorify Him with all the rewards He's given you.

Do you see how this works? When we do things in this life that glorify God, He will reward us in Heaven. When we receive our reward in Heaven we will use it to glorify God. You might say the reason He rewards us is so we can use that reward to glorify Him!

Of course, you have to actually have a reward in order to glorify God with it. After all, you can't cast your crown before the throne of God if you don't have a crown in the first place, can you?