

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • TV-042B

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By

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Matthew 19:27-30

“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”

Now, you’re going to find the message today to be interesting, I hope informative and I know controversial. So, if you will take your Bible and turn to the book of **Matthew chapter 19** I’m going to begin reading with **Matthew 19:27**. And I want you to follow in the Scriptures.

My subject: **“WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?”**

Now that’s interesting isn’t it? What about rewards in heaven? I’m going to answer some questions about rewards in heaven.

And I want you to listen carefully to this message now. We are going to cover a lot of ground and I hope provoke some thought, some study, and some interest. I’d like for you to follow. Don’t leave me now in the middle of the broadcast. You stay all the way through it.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Now, the apostle Peter said to the Master; now this is important here, this is the background for this message. The apostle Peter said to the master: *“Behold; we have forsaken all and followed thee. What shall we have therefore (or what shall be our reward)?”*

The Master answered Peter this way, “There’ll be a special place for you who are my disciples, talking about the 12 thrones and the 12 tribes. And everyone that hath believed on me; there will be a special place for you:

“And all of you who have believed on me and suffered for my sake; you shall receive a hundredfold. And you shall inherit eternal life. But, many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.” And then our Lord spake this parable unto them.

Now, as I said to you before, and I’ll repeat it again. When you want to study a parable in the Scripture you find out what was said, the occasion, the people who said it, what was said before our Lord spake the parable.

Usually and always there was something said to Him and then He spake a parable or story to cover that subject, to illustrate that subject. Peter, what is the occasion? Well, the apostle Peter, the disciple, he said to the Master; “Lord, we’ve left everything and we followed you. Now, what’s going to be our reward?”

And the Lord Jesus said, “Well, you’ll have a special place. You’re going to inherit eternal life and all who believe on me and all who suffer for my sake, for my glory, are going to have a special place, you are going to have eternal life. But we that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

And then our Lord spake this parable unto them in **Matthew chapter 20** and said; “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man, who went out early in the morning, (6:00 a.m.) to hire laborers to work in his vineyard.”

He went down to the marketplace at 6:00 in the morning. The sun was just up. And he found some men standing about idle in the marketplace and he said, “I’ve got a big vineyard up here. I need some laborers. Will you work for me?”

They said, “What do you pay?” He said, “I’ll pay you a Roman penny a day.” “Well, that’s fine.” All right; he took them up to his vineyard and put them to work.

Well, he came back to the marketplace and 9:00 a.m., three hours later. He found some more folks standing around there idle without jobs. He said, “Do you want to work?” They said, “We do; but nobody has hired us.”

He said, “Want to work for me?” “Yes; we want to work for you.” “Well, go to my vineyard and I’ll pay you what’s right.” Then he came back, the Scripture says here, at 12 noon. He did the same thing at 3:00 in the afternoon; did the same thing.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And then one hour before sunset, 5:00, one hour before the workday was over; he came down to the marketplace and he found some men there standing about, the Scripture says, “*idle*” and he said, “Why aren’t you working?” They said, “Nobody has hired us. We’ve been here all day.” But he said: “I’ll hire you. You go work in my vineyard and whatever’s right that’s what I’ll pay you.” And they went up there and worked for an hour.

Now, the day was over. All the men came in from the field. Some of them had been there 12 hours. Some of them had been there 9 hours and some of them had been there 6 hours and some of them had been there 3 hours.

Some of them had just gotten into the field. And He called them all in and He told his stewards, He said, “Pay them. Start with the last man hired and pay them all the same thing. Give every one of them the same thing.” This is the Master speaking now.

Now Peter said; “Lord, we have left all and followed you. We’ve gone out into the highways and the hedges. We’ve suffered, been mocked, scorned and ridiculed, cast off, cast out, and despised. And we followed you and we’ve left everything. We’ve given up everything. We’ve sacrificed everything. Now; what’s going to be our reward?”

This is what He’s telling them; here’s the meaning of parable. He’s telling Peter and the disciples (and we’re on this subject of rewards) the man who owned the field began with the last one hired who worked one hour and gave them all the same thing.

Now when the men who worked all day found this out they were upset, they were upset that they had objected to that arrangement. They didn’t like it a bit that the men who had worked only one hour or three hours or six hours got the same thing they got. And the Master asked them three questions.

He said; “Did I not pay you what you agreed upon? Isn’t that what I gave you? Did you agree to work for a Roman penny?” “Well yes we did.” “Well I paid you what I agreed.”

So then He said, “Can I do not with my own what I will? This is my money. This is my vineyard. It’s not your money and it’s not your vineyard. Can I not do with my own what I will?” Well, that’s true; He can, can’t He?

“Why are you jealous and envious because I’m gracious? Huh? Why are you jealous and envious over the grace of God? Is it not grace? Is it not grace to those who work 12 and to those who work one, to those who work nine, or to those who work three? It’s all grace, the grace of God.”

Why should you be angry, why should you be envious, why should you be upset if God chooses to be gracious? God’s not a man. God doesn’t think like a man. God doesn’t deal with us like a man.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

I'm glad He doesn't. God is merciful. Men are unmerciful. God is forgiving. Men are unforgiving. God is generous. Men are greedy. God says, "Are you envious, because I am generous?"

Now this parable; (now you listen) this parable is a rebuke to those who fall into a legal spirit of works and merit and reward. This parable is a rebuke to people who begin to calculate what their reward ought to be in heaven in exchange for their works here on this earth.

It's a rebuke to those who fall into this legal spirit regarding a kingdom of mercy, a kingdom in which a legal spirit is entirely out of place. Salvation is a gift and not debt. Now I'm going to state the whole case right now; you listen to me. Here's the whole case.

The Bible teaches that Jew and Gentile, sons of Abraham by nature, and sons of Abraham by faith, Old Testament believers, New Testament believers; the Bible teaches that all men, those who are saved early in life and those who are saved late in life, those who die as martyrs and those who live out their whole existence and die quietly in bed, those who are missionaries to a foreign field who work and labor and suffer and toil and those unknown natives who are converted by the missionary's efforts, those who give fortunes to the kingdom of God and those who give pennies; all of them, without exception, are loved of God with the same love, the same, everlasting, infinite and gracious love.

That's right; they're all chosen in Christ before the world began. They're all loved with an everlasting love. They're all redeemed by the same cross, the same blood, and the same Saviour. They're all objects of the same grace, every one of them, whether it's a missionary or a martyr, whether it's a preacher or a pauper; they're all loved by the same one with the same love.

And they're all redeemed by the same blood. They're all saved and justified by the same righteousness and they're all called by the same Spirit. And they're all equally the sons of God. That's right; they're all sons of God, they're all heirs of God, they're all joint-heirs of the glory of God.

In Jesus Christ they're all going to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. My friends; all of them are going to enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with the Son of God. Christ is our reward. "*We're complete in Him.*" And he that hath Christ hath all things.

Now I know that believers do not have the same offices and the same gifts. There were prophets and apostles. There are no more apostles. There were 12 apostles and that's it. There aren't any apostles today.

There are pastors and teachers and evangelists and missionaries, and bishops, called in the Scriptures, elders and deacons, those who serve. But there are now no apostles.

But there were apostles. They were given that gift by the Lord Jesus. There were prophets. There are evangelists, pastors, and teachers. There are diversities of gifts in the church.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

The body of Christ is made up of many members. A man may have the gift of preaching. Another man may have the gift of prayer. Another man or woman may have the gift of teaching. Another person may have the gift of giving.

Another may have the gift of healing. Another may have a gift of faith. These are gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are mentioned there in the Scripture. There are different gifts and diversities of gifts all given as the Holy Spirit will, all for the glory of Christ.

Our gifts are given to us. Whatever we have God gave it to us. It's not of our selves. It is of God. In heaven there's no need for these things because we're all going to be like Christ. In heaven there's no need for a personal instruction and help from someone else and personal edification by someone else. We're all going to be like Christ.

All believers do not have the same measure of grace and faith; that's right. Some have more faith than others. There's great faith and little faith. Some have more love than others; that's right. There are degrees of love, there are degrees of grace, there are degrees of humility, and there are degrees of faith.

There are elders in the church. There are young men, and there are infants (there are babes in Christ in the church that must be fed on the milk of the Word). All of us do not have the same degree of grace and faith. There's great faith and there's little faith.

But in heaven there's no faith; it's reality. Faith gives way to reality. Do you see that? Faith gives way to a personal knowledge and walk. Faith gives way to sight. Hope gives way to reality in heaven. We are all with Him. So, we don't need these gifts and different degrees of grace.

And then all believers do not have the same capacity for knowledge, for service, and works. Now the capacity for knowledge of the Scripture, knowledge of the doctrines, service, and work, has to do with a lot of things.

It differs according to personality, temperament, education, age, opportunity, location, and generation. Of course, the gift of God has the most to do with it. But these different, these different capacities for knowledge and service and works are according to God's grace.

But in heaven, in glory, every vessel of mercy prepared for glory will be equally capable of enjoying Christ. There's going to be no difference there. There's going to be no difference in offices, no difference in gifts, no difference in faith, and no difference in capacity for understanding because; *"Now I know in part, then I shall know as I am known."* Do you see that?

There may be; (now listen to me) there may be degrees of punishment in hell. The Scripture seems to indicate that there are degrees of punishment in hell. In other words, it depends on light, it depends on light, it depends on opportunity, and it depends on revelation.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Our Lord said that; *“One servant knew his master’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. The one who knew not the master’s will and did it not shall be beaten with few stripes.”*

But these degrees of punishment in hell are based upon opportunity, are based upon works, are based upon light, and are based upon sin. But my friend; there can be no degrees of glory for glory does not depend upon opportunity or works or sin. It depends upon the grace of God, totally on the grace of God.

Repentance is the gift of God. Faith is the gift of God. Love is the gift of God. *“He shed abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”* All graces are freely given us of God. So, the degrees of glory can’t be based upon opportunity or works, or revelation, or light, because it’s all the grace of God. It’s not what I did; it’s what God did.

Hell is what I did. If I go to hell, it’s because of what I did. So, there can be degrees of punishment. But if I go to heaven it’s not based on what I did; it’s based on what He did, totally on what He did.

Now, you can’t have degrees of glory and degrees of reward if it’s based not on what I did, but what somebody else did. His grace will be our reward. The crowns will be at His feet. The crowns will be on His head. Do you see what I’m saying?

There may be degrees of punishment in hell based upon what I did but there can be no degrees of reward in heaven because heaven is not based on what I did. It’s because of what He did. *“Not by works of righteousness which we’ve done but according to His mercy hath He saved us,”* His mercy.

“For by grace are you saved and that not of yourselves; it’s the gift of God.” So how can you distribute rewards out to people all of whom receive the gift?

Now then, there are those who do not like this, I know that. And the laborers who were hired first didn’t like it either, now did they? They didn’t like it either. And evidentially the disciples had a different idea about this too.

You know James and John; one of them wanted to sit on the right hand of the Lord and the other on the left hand when He came in glory. And Peter said here, “I followed you all my days; now what are you going to pay me, what’s going to be my reward?”

This is human nature. That’s the reason our Lord said this; that’s the reason He said to them; “I’ll give you what we agreed on and are you jealous because I’m gracious? What’s wrong with your spirit? Isn’t your spirit like my spirit?” You see; *“Can I not do with my own what I will?”*

Beginning with **Matthew chapter 20 verse 1**; turn to **verse 1** if you will and look at it. This man; (and we’ll get right into it) now this man who owned the vineyard went out to seek laborers. They didn’t seek him, he sought them. *“Even so, the Lord Jesus came into this world*

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

to seek and to save the lost;” that’s you and me, guilty sinners. We didn’t seek Him. *“Herein is love, not that we loved God; He loved us. There’s none that seeketh after God; He seeks us.*

He came to seek us. It’s His kingdom, it’s His vineyard. We have no claim to it at all. These laborers had no claim. He didn’t owe them anything. This man didn’t have to hire them. He didn’t owe them a thing. God doesn’t owe you and I anything.

He called them. God calls us. He made them willing to come. God makes us willing to come. And he agreed to pay them a good wage. That’s right; he said to them; “I’ll give you a Roman penny every day.”

So, our Lord who came has promised us; He’s promised to recompense us. He’s promised to bless us. He said, *“I’ll give you eternal life. This is the record; God hath given us eternal life and this life’s in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life.”*

He’s given us pardon from all sin. He’s given us the gift of His Holy Spirit. He’s given us sufficient grace for every trial. He’s given us eternal glory as the sons of God. That’s what He’s given us. He says; “Come to me. Come to my vineyard. Come to my kingdom; this is what I’ll give you.”

Now then, the man went out at different times of the day. Now you listen carefully to this, and he found more men, 9:00, 12:00, 3:00, even as the shadows of the day lengthened; at 5:00 he went out and found some men.

What does this mean? Here’s what it means; some are brought to Christ as children early in life. That’s right, consider Timothy. Paul said, *“From a child, thou hast known the holy Scriptures that are able to make thee wise unto salvation.”*

Timothy was in the kingdom of God. He was in the vineyard of Christ all his life from the time he sat at his grandmother and his mother’s knee and learned of God and learned of Christ and learned of the Gospel, *“Thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.”* He learned the types. He learned the shadows. And then Timothy saw the Saviour fulfilled.

Then there are some who will say that, “the third hour.” That’s somewhere between 15 years and 30 years of age, (9:00 a.m. one quarter of life). Then some will say in middle life. God calls them not when they’re children, not when they’re 30, but sometime between 30 and 45, somewhere around that age, 40 and 45. That’s noon.

The apostle Paul was saved when he was 40 years of age or a little older. That’s right, Timothy as a child, John the Baptist as an infant, a child, just a little fellow. He was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother’s womb, but Paul at midlife.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Then at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, the ninth hour; that represents to me people from 45-60; life is about three fourths gone. And then there was the 11th hour, 5:00 o'clock, one more hour of life left, like the thief on the cross or perhaps some of you that are listening to me.

There's a man who listens to this television program, and God saved him. He's almost 80 years of age. A man was converted in our church a few months ago 88 years of age. I baptized him, 88 years of age. That's about 5:00 in the evening.

He found them all in the same place, all these people who were hired early, 6:00, 9:00, 12:00, and 3:00, were all hired in the marketplace. God finds His people in the same place, in sin. He found them all doing the same thing, nothing, idle in rags and unemployed.

He found them. They didn't find Him. Nobody was knocking his door down trying to go to work. He went out and found them. He found you. He agreed to give them what was right, not according to justice but rather what was right according to grace.

Now, when the day was over and the sun was set, he calls them all in beginning at the last one and then going to the first one and they all received the same thing. So, here's what I'm saying; when life is over and the redeemed of all ages, all saved at different times in life, some are early and some middle, and some afternoon and some late.

When they're brought before the Redeemer; those who labored long and those who haven't labored at all; they shall all be gathered unto their Lord and they shall all enter the joys of the Lord, the same joys, the same pleasures and the same life. They will all be trophies of His grace, not their works. They'll all be trophies of His love. They will all be like Christ.

That man who was saved at 88 years of age is going to be like Christ. I'm going to be like Christ. I've been preaching 31 years. He's 88 years of age but he's going to be like Christ and so am I.

And that's the ultimate; that is the infinite. There's nothing better. If I'm going to be like Christ, why would I want a yo-yo to play with? I'm going to be like Christ. I put away childish things. What will these material things mean to me in glory when I'm like Christ?

There'll be no high and low seats in heaven. There'll be no great saints and small saints. There'll be no mansions and cabins. There'll be no class systems such as kings and paupers. We're all kings, we're all saints, and we're all sons of God and we're all like Christ in glory.

There can be no greater reward than to be like the Master. And this reward business was born of legalism; it was born of a false interpretation of Scripture, and a false understanding of grace. It's all of grace, all of grace. We don't deserve anything. We don't even deserve to be like Christ.

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

Now let me offer some observations in bringing this message to a close. I want to offer some observations for your consideration. I want you to consider these things and you especially who have been taken up with the idea, and I don't know where we get it, but the idea of degrees of glory and special rewards for our works and our service to God.

Will you consider these things? You say, "I've been in the kingdom of God since I was a child and here this man is just 80 years of age just now coming. Do you mean he's going to have the same thing I have?"

That's right! "It's not fair!" What's not fair? Actually, who got the greater blessing? Now listen to me; you who are converted early in life and lived in fellowship with God all your life; you've had the privilege of knowing His grace and knowing His love and knowing His peace.

You consider yourself deprived because you've been in the kingdom of God longer than that? I consider myself to be blessed that God let me know Him 30 years longer than that fellow has known him.

My, what a blessing, what grace, what love! Well, what grace it has been to walk with God. Do you not thank God for it? Have you considered walking with the Saviour to be a sacrifice or a blessing? Have you considered knowing Christ all the days of your life as to have been deprived of something or has that been the mercy of God? That's a reward!

Secondly: Suppose we do preach. Who gave us the grace to preach? Who enabled us to preach? Who gave us the gift? It's not ours. "*Who maketh thee to differ? What do you have that you didn't receive?*"

Suppose you sing in the choir; you've been singing there 20 years. Who gave you the voice? God could have made you croak like a frog. He gave you that voice.

Why do you take any credit for it? Why do you want a crown in heaven because God gave you a good voice? Do you thank Him for it? Do you thank Him for letting you use it for His glory?

Suppose you give. Suppose you have been giving all your life. You've been giving thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars to missionary programs to the preaching of the Gospel. Who blessed you with the knowledge to earn your living? Who blessed you with making you prosperous and giving you a good job and a good income? Huh? Where'd that come from?

You could have come out a pauper. You could have been an imbecile. You could have been a ward of the State. God gave you a brain, He gave you talent and He gave you a job.

And then you talk about serving the Lord. Why, it's all His grace. "*Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*" How can I accept a reward for something that God did?

WHAT ABOUT REWARDS IN HEAVEN?

MATTHEW 19:27-30 • HENRY T. MAHAN

And then I'll tell you this; you listen to me and I'll shoot this right at any person who believes that he deserves something in heaven that somebody else doesn't deserve, who is saved by the blood of Christ.

It's disturbing to me that any believer would want a higher seat than somebody else. I really can't connect that with humility or grace or love. It's disturbing to me that any believer, that any child of God who says "*I'm the chief of sinners. I'm less than the least of all the saints,*" would want a brighter crown than somebody else or a greater reward or a bigger house; this is a denial of everything we preach.

And when we render the best we can; you just say this; "*I'm still an unprofitable servant, an unprofitable servant. The last shall be first and the first shall be last. And he that would be greatest among you; let him be your servant!*"