



## Rewards

On what basis does God bestow rewards to the believer? Rewards are based on staying in fellowship and using God's grace resources in the spiritual life including the function of spiritual gifts. Rewards are bestowed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-13. Rewards are often illustrated by crowns. See category on [Crowns](#).

*"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, NASB)*

*"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." (Romans 14:10, NASB)*

*"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 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." (1 Corinthians 3:11-13, NASB)*

You can lose rewards, but you can never lose your salvation. 1 Cor. 3:14-15; 2 Tim. 2:12-13.

*"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 3:14-15, NASB)*

*"If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." (2 Timothy 2:12-13, NASB)*

The Judgment Seat of Christ takes place after the Rapture of the Church while the Tribulation is unfolding on the earth. Rev. 19:7-8.

*"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, NASB)*

In Matthew 19:27, Peter is looking at the doctrine of rewards, but with a false emphasis. He is telling the Lord how great he is and how the Lord ought to reward him.

*"Then Peter said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?'" (Matthew 19:27, NASB)*

Our Lord was emphasizing regeneration, then He talked about the reign of the apostles in eternity and their maximum rewards. Every believer has exactly the same position in Christ, the same responsibilities, the same grace resources, except in the field of spiritual gifts.

*"And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 'And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.' (Matthew 19:28-29, NASB)*

Faithfulness or the utilization of God's grace resources is the basis of rewards, not success. This means



that legalism, which is the enemy of grace, will keep many prominent believers from rewards in eternity. Legalism can only produce human good and human good is not rewarded. It will be revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Legalism keeps the believer from depending upon the filling of the Holy Spirit. Instead, legalism causes the believer to depend on their area of strength and on their human good production. 1 Cor. 3:12-15.

*“Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 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 3:12-15, NASB)*

Prominence is not the basis of reward, faithfulness is. Matt. 25:21.

*“His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'” (Matthew 25:21, NASB)*

In Matthew 19:30, “But many who are first” refers to many of the first believers into the Church Age, will be last in rewards. It is possible for many Christians living today to have more rewards than the first century disciples. “The last” could mean that Christians alive today, perhaps, will be first in rewards. In other words, where you come into the picture time wise does not determine your reward. People think the first century was the greatest century. Not necessarily.

*“But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.” (Matthew 19:30, NASB)*

### **The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard**

Matthew 20 contrasts the legalistic believer and the grace believer. The legalistic believer hustles all day and gets paid a denarius. The believer who comes on the scene at the last hour leaves the wages up to the discretion of the landowner and gets exactly the same wage. It is a believer operating on grace. Those who labor an hour on the basis of grace are rewarded as much as the hustler working on the basis of legalism.

Remember that the apostles, prophets, healers with powerful and spectacular temporary spiritual gifts, are not necessarily going to bring big rewards. The first century was loaded with legalism. This is unique in that at the beginning of the Millennium they will judge with the 12 tribes; a reward, but some of those disciples are not going to get the rewards that you can get right now.

### **The Hiring of Laborers**

First group arrived at 6:00 a.m. They agreed to a special contract. They did not allow their wages to be decided by the integrity of the vineyard owner. The contract was one denarius for a day's wages per head. Today, for a general farm laborer for 10 hours, that would be about \$140. In bargaining, they get into legalism. They pinned down the landowner to pay them on the basis of what they deserved - the going wage rate at that time. This represents legalism in the spiritual life. Matt. 20:1-7.

*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing*



*here idle all day long?’ “They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ “ (Matthew 20:1-7, NASB)*

By application, they should have been walking in fellowship and working as unto the Lord and depending upon His perfect essence. Those late in the Church Age will be first in rewards. The Lord will keep a firm contract and it illustrates blessing under the Mosaic Law, but missing the blessing of grace. The Mosaic Law emphasized reward only for work done and then God will bless. Legalism hinders reward. Legalism hinders spiritual production of divine good.

The second group started work at 9:00 a.m. They were “standing idle.” They came too late to work with the first group, so waited for several hours. They had no contract and left their compensation up to the vineyard owner - “whatsoever is right I will give you” in Matthew 20:4. This represents grace, no bargaining with the vineyard owner. They depended upon the character of the vineyard owner.

The third and fourth groups started work at the sixth and ninth hour. These were grace situations. The vineyard owner would pay them what he wished. The fifth group started work at the 11th hour or 5:00 p.m. These last three groups of workers will receive exactly the same wages as the people who worked hard from 6:00 a.m. in the morning. This is a true grace illustration. What you receive as rewards will be determined by our Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will all be based on His unfailing love and grace. It will be based on who and what He is. We must leave the matter in His hands.

Being a charter member on the Day of Pentecost doesn’t give those believers an advantage over believers living today. There were 120 charter members. It is quality, not quantity that is the basis of reward. Those who worked from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. worked 12 hours on the basis of legalism. Those who were the 11th hour workers operated for one hour on the filling of the Holy Spirit. Reward is based on the understanding and utilizing of grace, rather than one’s own efforts.

The 6:00 a.m. workers did not get more reward than those who came at 5:00 p.m. They complained about it, but they didn’t get any more. Why? Because of the principle of grace. Grace does not depend upon the function of human norms and standards and abilities. Grace depends upon the character of God. Grace is God doing the doing and man receiving the benefit. God gets the credit.

### The Payment of Reward

At 6:00 p.m., the landowner paid the last group of workers who arrived at 5:00 p.m. The first group of workers saw this, but could not recognize the grace principle. They grumbled when confronted with grace. They thought it was completely unfair. This parable was to illustrate and teach the disciples who have been fighting over who would be the greatest and who would receive the greatest rewards. The first of them will be last, but the last (Paul or later believers) will be first. Matt. 20:8-11.

*“ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.’ “When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. “When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. “When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, “ (Matthew 20:8-11, NASB)*

Purpose of the parable is an indictment of legalism. Our Lord’s disciples had been arguing as to who would be the greatest. God provides the spiritual capital and only God provides the reward. God in His Sovereignty determines the rewards for believers in grace because He is absolutely perfect.

The ones who were hired later did not bargain for their wages. Sometimes tithers are bargainners. Sometimes people dedicate their lives for bargains. They say, “Now look, God, I’ll come to prayer



meeting for a year if you'll do this." They try to bargain with God! The point is that legalism eliminates grace.

### The Reaction of the Legalistic Crowd

In Matthew 20:11-12, the legalists (the 5:00 a.m. group) always think they are getting a raunchy deal. They agreed to work for a denarius, and the landowner (by application, the Lord) was fair because he gave them what he agreed to, what they had bargained for per the agreed contract. Their complaint was they assumed all had bargained for the same wages. When the landowner revealed that he had given the later groups of workers a more generous wage based on his character, they felt that was unfair. The later groups all trusted in the fairness of the landowner and would accept whatever wage he felt was fair.

*"When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.'" (Matthew 20:11-12, NASB)*

This parable demonstrates God's grace principle and that rewards will only be based on the perfect character of God. It also demonstrates the mental attitude of the legalist. Don't go on legalism, ever! "The first shall be last." The first in the field will be last in rewards; the last in the field will be first in rewards. The first is a legalist and the last a grace person.

### The Justice of the Householder

In Matthew 20:13, the word "Friend" actually means "partner." The vineyard owner gave what wage he wished. God gives to us what He wishes. We cannot earn grace and we will never deserve God's grace! No one ever gets ahead on a legalistic basis. No one gets ahead because he deserves it. The believer only gets ahead in the spiritual life on a grace basis. Grace is to God's credit and based on His perfect character.

*"But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?'" (Matthew 20:13, NASB)*

It is a major breakthrough when you understand grace and you relax and join the human race. You've probably known for a long time that no one else is any good, but then, neither are you! As you grow spiritually, you begin to relax. You begin to be used by the Lord. It isn't who and what you are that counts. It is who and what the Lord is.

In Matthew 20:14, the vineyard owner tells the workers to "pick up your wages" and go. They were so mad that they actually threw their money down on the ground. "Take what is yours and go." This is the Lord's attitude toward legalism.

*"Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you." (Matthew 20:14, NASB)*

We are in union with Jesus Christ. We are His. Everything belongs to Him! The legalist thinks God is unfair. The legalistic believer has a legalistic and grudging eye. The householder has a gracious and a generous eye. The legalistic workers are trying to reduce the gracious householder to their level. The householder's good was divine good. The legalist produced human good. Don't ever judge what the Lord provides by human norms and standards!

### The Conclusion of the Parable

The last into the field will be first in rewards. The first into the field will be last in rewards. Many shall



be called (salvation), but few are chosen for rewards. Rewards depend upon the sovereign grace of God. No one earns them. No one deserves them. The first ones into the field are legalistic and complaining about their reward. The first ones into the field are critical of grace, which is the only thing they cannot afford to criticize. Matt. 20:15-16.

*"Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?" "So the last shall be first, and the first last." (Matthew 20:15-16, NASB)*

The grace of God does not produce an envious attitude. While many are saved by grace, few continue to live by grace. Rewards are given on the basis of living the Christian way of life according to the Word of God.

## **The Jericho Discourse**

### A Salvation Prophecy

In Matthew 20:17-19, the Lord said, He was going to die and they said, "What do you mean, Lord; that you're going to die?" "The Son of Man" is going to die (His humanity). The Son of Man is a title of the humanity of Jesus Christ. God cannot die. The humanity of Jesus Christ was going to die. He will be betrayed by Judas. Religious people will condemn him to death. He will be delivered to the Gentiles - Pilate, Herod, and the Romans. He will be handed over to the mockers, the whippers, the crucifiers.

*"As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." " (Matthew 20:17-19, NASB)*

On the third day, Gentile time, He will be raised up. "He will be raised up" is the future passive indicative of ἐγείρω (egeirō). This is a logical future tense and means that it is logical if He died and God approves, He will rise again. Resurrection is the crowning touch in the whole grace operation.

### The Ambitious Mother (Salome)

James and John wanted to sit in the place of prominence, they wanted the highest rewards (first into the field). God help you if you have an ambitious mother like Salome. Salome went to the Lord and tried to make a deal, to make a firm contract that her two sons would sit on the right and on the left in the kingdom (the highest places). Matt. 20:20-21.

*"Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left." " (Matthew 20:20-21, NASB)*

First of all, Salome hadn't been listening to Bible doctrine and was apparently thinking about something else. She didn't get it at all and ignored the parable of the householder. Secondly, she failed to realize that reward is based on God's grace, not on legalism. Thirdly, since entrance into salvation is only by grace, it follows that everything in the Christian way of life will only be by grace. Salome fell into Peter's pattern, bypassing the Cross for the crown. Matt. 16:21-23; Matt. 17.

*"From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to*





*You.” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” “ (Matthew 16:21-23, NASB)*

In Matthew 20:20, “bowing down and making a request of Him” means that Salome was a very thoughtful mother and put the interests of her sons as a priority. First place for both sons was all she wanted. Salome falls into the category of the ambitious mother. As many mothers will think, her boys are the best boys! However, Salome did not know what she was asking. She was actually putting her boys down at the end of the line! She was ignorant of Bible doctrine!

Ambition for children on the part of parents can often ruin the children. It is worse than spoiling your children. Examples of this are fathers who want their sons to follow them in their vocation and mothers who fear that their daughters aren’t going to get married and will become old maids, so they push them out to date too early and furnishing them with the most modern contraceptives.

### The Reply of Jesus

How can someone like this fall into this pattern? Through ignorance of Bible doctrine. People off on some segment of false teaching do this like those in the tongues movement, faith healers and false teachers.

In Matthew 20:22, Salome kept on asking. She had been thinking this over and mulling it over in her mind and had asked Him several times now. She wanted to be cast into the role of the grand dame. This is the mother image personified to the extreme, to live in the shadow of the greatness of her children.

*“But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.”“ (Matthew 20:22, NASB)*

In Matthew 20:22, “the cup” stands for the sins of the entire world. Christ drinks the cup meaning that all of the sins of mankind are judged. The number one person in the Kingdom is the One who drinks the cup. Who drinks the cup? The Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord had a wonderful sense of humor. What He is asking them is whether they are able to go to the Cross and die for the sins of the world. Obviously, they cannot.

On the Cross, sin was judged and human good was rejected. Human good will be judged later at the Judgment Seat of Christ for Church Age believers and at the Great White Throne for all unbelievers. The Baptism of the Cup is Jesus Christ being identified with sin on the Cross. The two disciples say to Jesus Christ that they are able to take the cup. John is saying, “Why sure.” They didn’t understand the Cross. All can appropriate this grace, but only one can go to the Cross. Legalism always says, participate, get in the program, work, work, work, but you can’t work for rewards! They are given on the basis of grace. Man cannot participate in the work of God.

### The Sovereignty of the Father in the Distribution of Rewards

In Matthew 20:23, “My cup you shall drink” means they will die, but not in the sense that they thought. They would die spiritually on the Cross when Christ died. Not participation, but appropriation where drinking becomes an illustration of faith. God has all the facts and will give out the rewards. These rewards have already been prepared in the past and will stand forever.

*“He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” “ (Matthew 20:23, NASB)*



### The Reaction of the Ten Disciples

In Matthew 20:24, we have the reaction of the ten disciples. They got hot under their robes. They were extremely indignant. It was all the mother's fault, but the two sons get the heat of reaction by the disciples. As a result of their mother getting into the picture, there were two big arguments. The two sons versus the ten other disciples and the ten disciples versus the two sons.

*“And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.” (Matthew 20:24, NASB)*

In Matthew 20:25-28, our Lord contrasted His spiritual kingdom to come with the Roman Empire at that time.

*“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” “ (Matthew 20:25-28, NASB)*