

What Is The True Reward Of The Saved?

*When you die, will you go to heaven? The short answer is: No,
and your Bible says neither will anyone else.*

JOHN 3:16 MAY BE the most quoted passage in the Bible, but most people read their own meaning into it. For example: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, so that whosoever believes in Him may not go to hell, but go to heaven.”

But is that what the Bible really says? *No*. Unless we receive eternal life *we will perish*: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life” (John 3:16, *Faithful Version*). This verse presents simple opposites: you are either granted eternal *life* or you *perish*—which means no life at all. Protestants want to ignore the plain meaning of *perish*, which cannot mean spending eternity in some kind of hell fire.

Three verses before, in John 3:13, we read something almost no professing Christian believes—that *no one* has ever ascended to heaven except Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven: “And no one has ascended into heaven, except He Who came down from heaven, even the Son of man, Who is [presently] in heaven” (John 3:13).

Misguided people often misquote the Scriptures. And those who insist that the “saved” go to heaven are certainly misguided. But if heaven is not the reward of the saved, then what *is* that reward? Revelation 5 tells us that the saints will be kings and priests ruling here *on earth*, not up in heaven: “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book, and to open its seals because You were slain, and did redeem us to God by Your own blood, out of every tribe and language and people and nation, and did make us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth’ ” (Rev. 5:9-10). After all, scripture says that the meek will inherit the *earth*, not heaven (Matt. 5:5; Psa. 37:11).

Yes, those in the first resurrection will reign with Christ *here on earth* for a thousand years: “Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6). Add to this what the angel Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1. He said that she would have a son, name Him Jesus, and that God would give Him the throne of David—from which He would rule over the house of Israel forever. So once Jesus returns, He isn’t going back to heaven—His future is tied to *earth*.

But how do we attain that reward? Acts 2:38 explains that we must repent of our sins: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of

sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ ” But what is sin? Some would say “dancing, drinking, and card playing.” But what is God’s definition of sin? “Sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4, KJV). Or better put, “Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.”

We must repent of violating God’s law. What is God’s law? For starters, that means the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). True Christians keep the commandments of God (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). Acts 2:38 says that after repentance we must then be baptized by full immersion in water by a qualified representative of God (one who preaches only the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible).

So if we do not receive our reward immediately at death, then *when* do we receive it? Revelation 22:12 says we receive that reward when Jesus returns to earth and *raises the dead* in Christ to eternal life: “And behold, I am coming quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render to each one according as his work shall be.”

The apostle Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 4:13-17 that when Christ returns the faithful dead will be raised—then those who are alive will rise with them and meet Christ in the *air*: “But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep, because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds for the meeting with the Lord in the air [on a sea of glass, Revelation 15:2]; and so shall we always be with the Lord.”

Then we will return to the earth to rule with him.

Four times in John chapter 6 (verses 39, 40, 44, and 54) Christ says He will raise up the faithful Christian “at the last day.” In I Corinthians 15 we read that we will *put on* immortality at Christ’s return. Why? Because right now *we do not have it* (another false tenet of mainstream Christianity debunked). Paul explains further that the dead in Christ are raised as incorruptible spirit beings: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality. Now when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’ ” (verses 50-54).

I Peter 1:13 shows that we inherit eternal life *at the revelation of Christ*. “For this reason, be prepared in your minds, be self-controlled, and be fully hoping in the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Paul describes in Philippians 3:21 how our physical bodies will be exchanged for glorious spirit bodies: “[Christ] will transform our vile bodies, that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.” We will then be sons and daughters of God and joint heirs of all that Christ will inherit at His return: “Now if we are children, we are also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him” (Rom. 8:17).

What will we be able to do? Here is an example: After Christ was resurrected, He had the power to be invisible and walk through walls; yet, if He chose, He could appear physical and even eat food (John 21:9–14). We also will have those same abilities as spirit beings.

Daniel 7:27 tells us the whole Kingdom *under*—not *in*—heaven will be given to the saints of the Most High: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And all kingdoms shall serve and obey Him.”

But after baptism and receipt of the Spirit, what must we *do* to attain that kingdom? In Luke 19:11–26 we read a parable given by Christ about a nobleman who goes away to receive a kingdom. He gives each of his servants a pound with which to earn money by trading while he is away. When he returns, he calls each servant to account for what they have gained by trading.

The one who gained 10 pounds was given rulership over 10 cities in the new king’s kingdom. Another, who had gained five pounds, was given five cities to rule. The lesson to be learned here is that whatever spiritual gift God gives us is for us to *build* on, in order to grow spiritually. Peter sums it up in II Peter 3:18: “Rather, be growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 22:12 tells us that the *reward* we receive at Christ’s return will be based on our *work*, our spiritual growth. How do we maximize that spiritual growth? By daily prayer and Bible study, plus occasional fasting. Continually drawing upon the Holy Spirit will give us the power to overcome our spiritual weaknesses and build in us the very nature and character of Jesus Christ, which we’re told in Ephesians 4:11–15 is our goal: “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in cunning craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error; but speaking the truth in love, may in all things

grow up into Him Who is the Head, even Christ”

Paul also tells us in Galatians 4:19 that Christ must be formed in us: “My little children, for whom I am again laboring in pain until Christ has been formed in you.” And he says in Colossians 1:27 that Christ *in* us is our hope of glory: “To whom God did will to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

God has called faithful Christians to use His Holy Spirit to grow and become more and more like our brother Jesus Christ—so we can inherit co-ownership with Him in the coming Kingdom of God *on earth* at His return. That—not heaven—is the *true* reward of the faithful.

—*Duncan MacLeod*