

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Volume 14, Issue 3

August 2017

Are You Ready for the Rapture? (Part 10)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Last month we introduced the final point of the message: **The Events after the Rapture**. There are two events involving the saved that we will discuss. The first is The Judging. I will mention the verses that describe the judging, and then discuss the rewards associated with that judging. Romans 14:10 says, *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”* II Corinthians 5:10 says, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* Those two verses state that the Judgment Seat will take place, but it is in I Corinthians 3:12-15 that we find the description of what will be involved in that Judgment Seat. As I pointed out last month, the words Judgment Seat do not appear in the I Corinthians 3 passage, but some words are similar. If the account in I Corinthians 3 is to be taken literally, and I believe wholeheartedly that it should be, the only occasion in which that rewarding can happen is at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Notice what these verses say—*“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.”* Again, this is not a judgment to see if one will enter Heaven. The common teaching that everyone is at the same judgment is not taught in Scripture. The saved are raptured out as we have described earlier in the message. The unsaved are left on the earth. They will endure the Tribulation that is mentioned in several

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passages of Scripture and is described in detail from Revelation 6-18. This Judgment Seat of Christ is for believers only. It is a time of rewarding for the believer's faithfulness to Christ.

Notice the language throughout I Corinthians 3:12-15. Verse 13 says, *“Every man's work...shall be revealed by fire.”* I believe the fire described here is referring to the eyes of Christ. The last clause of Revelation 1:14 says, *“And his eyes were as a flame of fire.”* That is a descriptive term. His eyes are not really fire but are *“as a flame of fire.”* Fire is used throughout the Bible as a picture of testing or judgment. It is a description of intensity. Christ knows our hearts. When he was on the earth, He revealed that He knew the thoughts of the Pharisees and of His own apostles. Likewise, He knows our thoughts. He can see into our heart and know why we do what we do. He knows the motives behind our actions.

The last part of I Corinthians 3:13 says, *“And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.”* The phrase what sort it is refers to the quality or excellency of the work. Verse 12 introduces the passage by talking about gold, silver, precious stones, and wood, hay, stubble. The first three are quality substances that will survive a fire. The last three are not able to survive a fire. Paul, led by the Holy Ghost, is describing the work of the believer, not to be saved, but because he is saved. He is describing the quality of our labor for Christ. If it is done for selfish motive, then it is wood, hay, and stubble and of no value to Christ. If it is done for Christ's glory and honor, then it is gold, silver, and precious stones. It is of great value to Christ, and He is honored by it.

Verse 14 says, *“If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”* This is the purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ—to reward the faithful believer. Sadly, many believers have not faithfully served Christ. They either have done nothing at all for Him, or they have done some outward work that in reality was done for their own glory. All believers will stand before Christ. Romans 14:10 and II Corinthians 5:10 are both very clear

about that. Romans 14:10 says, "*We shall all stand.*" II Corinthians 5:10 says, "*We must all appear.*" You cannot escape it. You will stand before Christ. Will there be any reward for your service for Him?

But what are those rewards? Notice the language of Revelation 4. Verse 1 is a picture of the Rapture of the Church. John is caught up to Heaven. That is what will happen to all church-age saints as described in I Thessalonians 4 :13-18. Then in verse 4 John sees 24 elders. Who are these 24 elders? They are a representation of Old and New Testament saints. At the end of the chapter, verses 9-11 describe the results of the Judgment Seat of Christ. The verses say, "*And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" The word crowns is not referring to kingly crowns, but to victor's crowns. They were the ones given to athletes as a reward for their victory in athletic contests. The crowns described in this passage are given to believers who have faithfully served Christ. Their labor for Christ has been tested by the fire of Christ and found worthy of reward.

It is interesting to note that five crowns are mentioned throughout the New Testament. We will discuss them in the order in which they appear. The first crown is mentioned in I Corinthians 9:25. The verse says, "*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.*" The first crown is *The Incorruptible Crown*. Verse 27 gives us the key to winning this crown. It says, "*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.*" To win the Incorruptible Crown, we must keep our body (the flesh) under control. This means that we will not live according to what our flesh

desires, but according to what God desires. We will not be controlled by the flesh, but by God. This can never be done in our own strength. It will only be done as we surrender ourselves to the Holy Ghost and allow Him to fill us and control our life. This is the first crown, but it is the key to the others. We will never win the other crowns, if we do not first overcome and put the flesh under God's control.

The second crown is described in I Thessalonians 2:19. It says, "*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*" The second crown is *The Crown of Rejoicing*. Paul asks the question, "What is our crown of rejoicing?" He answers that by saying the Thessalonian believers are. The crown of rejoicing is given to those who faithfully witness for Christ. It may be through the public proclamation of a preacher or the personal witness of any believer. It will be given to those who actually see the fruit come forth and to those who plant the seed and water it. I believe it will also be given to those who give so others can spend more time in proclaiming the Gospel. Anything done with the right attitude that enables the preaching and witnessing of the Gospel will be rewarded by Christ.

II Timothy 4:8 describes the third crown. The verse says, "*Henceforth there 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.*" The third crown is *The Crown of Righteousness*. As the last clause of the verse says, it is given to those that love Christ's appearing. What does that mean? I believe it refers to both our desires and our actions. The receiver of this crown will be one who truly desires for the Lord to come. He will often say as John did in Revelation 22:20, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*" These will not be empty words, but it will be evidenced by a life lived for the honor and glory of Christ.

The fourth crown, *The Crown of Life*, is described in James 1:12. It says, "*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.*” The temptation described here refers to testings or trials. The one who endures the trial by rejoicing in them, as I Peter 4:12-13 describes, will be rewarded. The one who complains through them will not be rewarded.

The final crown is *The Crown of Glory*. I Peter 5:4 says of it, “*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*” The context is describing the faithful preacher, but I think it may also be applied to anyone who teaches the Word, such as a Sunday School teacher or parent. One who faithfully teaches and preaches God’s Word will receive the Crown of Glory.

After we cast these crowns at the feet of Jesus (Revelation 4:10-11), we will be united with Christ forever. The Joining of Christ and the saved through the marriage and marriage supper is described in Revelation 19:7-10. What a time of rejoicing that will be! We will be forever with Christ. It impacted John so much that he fell at the feet of the angel. The angel told him that he was not to be worshipped, but the reality of being with Christ forever caused John to fall down and worship. Dear friend, to be at that marriage and marriage supper you must be saved by Jesus Christ. You must repent of your sin and believe that Jesus died for your sins. Then, and only then, will you be ready for the rapture. So, are you saved? Are you faithfully serving Christ? Are you ready for the Rapture?