

What's In It For Us?

Then, Simon Peter said to Jesus: *"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us (literally: what are we to get)?"* (Matthew 19:27). Today, we would say, "What's in it for us?"

And Jesus answered him with disappointment in his eyes and rebuke in his voice: "Peter, Peter. How could you even think such a thing, much less come right out and say it!" He then gave him and the rest of the ambitious apostles a lengthy lecture on humility and true spirituality.

Obviously and fortunately, Jesus' response is *not* the Gospel version, but that is the way some of us would have responded to Peter. A down-to-earth Simon Peter asked Jesus a natural, practical question. Jesus thought it was an appropriate query and he answered accordingly.

He said, *"...you [apostles], including Peter – a poor, simple, uneducated fisherman – you will sit on 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 fields [in other words, if anyone left any loved thing or any loved one] for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much..."* (vv 28,29).

If you have never seen biblical reward references concentrated in one place, you may have an unexpected reaction. But, whatever your initial response, it will not change the truth that rewards are an essential part of God's earthly and eternal economy. But, your participation or nonparticipation in his program will affect both your present relationship with the Lord and your future status in heaven.

This is not the place to list *all* the reward references. For now, I will share some examples. (Packaging them together like this has helped me to better see where God is coming from and where he is going.)

"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels; and then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matthew 16:27).

"...each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers... the fire will test the quality of each man's work."

If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Corinthians 3:8-9,13-15).

"...when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account" (Philippians 4:15-17). Moffat: *"...for it is the interest that accumulates in this way to your divine credit!"*

"Command [the rich] to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:18-

19). Question: What is your firm foundation for the coming age, and how do you take hold of the life that is truly life? The answer is in the treasures you are laying up right now by doing good deeds, being generous and sharing with others.

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done" (Revelation 22:12).

We think of Moses as being a model of modesty, but even he *"...was looking ahead to his reward"* (Hebrews 11:26). (By the way, how did he know he would be rewarded?)

Four hundred years before Moses, God told Abram, *"...your reward will be very great"* (NIV footnote, Genesis 15:1). And God is telling *us* ahead of time that he has set up *not* a *Retirement Plan* but a *Promotion Plan* for us. It is of the utmost importance – both to him and to us – that we be fully aware of it and conscientiously participate in it. ♦♦