

Basic Doctrines: The Reward Of The Saved

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Before embarking on a journey, it is very important to understand where one is going! To succeed in any endeavor, one must have a clear-cut goal, a well-defined destination. This principle holds true in the Christian life. We must know what our goal is in order to be successful in attaining it. What is the ultimate purpose of Christianity? What is the reward of a saved and converted Christian? This is one of the most misunderstood facets of the Christian religion. If a poll were taken of the general population about what they thought was the reward of the saved, most people would probably say, "Heaven."

Most professing Christian churches teach just that. However, when we look into the Bible, we find that it says no such thing. Jesus Christ says that we must "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6: 33). God's Word shows that His Kingdom will be here on earth, not in heaven. The promise of God to His faithful people is not some ethereal concept of floating on a cloud and strumming a harp! In this lesson, we shall see that God has given His people a solid promise of reigning and ruling on earth—administering God's government—in positions of authority under the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ!

1. To whom were given the promises pertaining to salvation? Galatians 3:16; Acts 2:39.

Comment: Initially, the promises pertaining to salvation were given to Abraham and his Seed, who was Christ. Then God extended the promises to all Christians—those whom He has called to salvation at this time.

2. What did God promise to Abraham? Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17: 3-8; Genesis 22:17-18.

Comment: God made a twofold promise to Abraham. The first was a material promise that he would be the father of many nations and that kings would descend from him. God promised him that his progeny would inherit the land of Canaan, an expanse that He defined as stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates rivers. The second, but more important, promise was spiritual. God promised Abraham that in his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This promise encompasses the life and work of Abraham's best known and most revered descendant, Jesus Christ.

3. Was this promise later extended to include the inheritance of the whole world? Romans 4:13.

Comment: Abraham's physical descendants, the nation of Israel, inherited the land of Canaan. This was a type of Abraham's spiritual descendants inheriting the earth.

4. How do we become heirs of this inheritance? Galatians 3:26-29.

Comment: True Christians exhibit the faith and righteousness of Abraham. God considers them to be the patriarch's spiritual descendants regardless of their race or sex. Consequently, they will inherit the same promises made to Abraham.

5. Will those who display Jesus' character traits inherit the earth? Matthew 5:5.

Comment: Jesus' words paraphrase the words of David in Psalm 37:11: "But the meek shall inherit the earth." Notice that neither Jesus nor David says anything about inheriting some mystical place in the heavens.

6. Did Jesus refer to His Kingdom as "the kingdom of heaven"? Matthew 5:3,10.

Comment: Jesus was not saying that Christians go to heaven. In these verses, "of" shows possession, not location. It could just have correctly been translated, "heaven's kingdom" just as we often use "God's Kingdom" rather than "Kingdom of God." After comparing the ways He interchangeably used the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God," it is obvious that He is referring to the government (Isaiah 9:6) that He will bring from heaven and set up on the earth when He returns.

7. At His glorious second coming, will Christ bring His reward to His faithful servants with Him? Isaiah 40:10.

Comment: When Jesus triumphantly returns to the earth, He will establish the Kingdom of God to rule over the people of the world. At that time, His faithful disciples will receive their reward. Notice that He comes to do a work—to gather, feed and shepherd a flock (verse 11). The reward of the saved is linked to His future work on earth.

8. What will that reward be and what will resurrected Christians be doing on earth? Isaiah 32:1; Revelation 5:10; 2:25-27; 20:6.

Comment: With Jesus Christ ruling as King over all the earth, we, as co-heirs with Him (Romans 8:17), will be regarded as princes ruling under Him. He will give His true followers positions of rulership in His Kingdom, where, it is specifically stated, "we shall reign *on the earth*."

9. Will we have the opportunity to teach the people of the earth how to live in peace within God's way of life? Isaiah 11:1-9; 30:20.

Comment: We will have the opportunity to build a totally new world of peace, happiness and prosperity, and we will accomplish this by teaching and enforcing obedience to God's laws throughout the whole earth. This will be our main responsibility during the thousand-year reign of Christ.

10. What is the ultimate reward of the Christian following the Millennium? Hebrews 2:5-8.

Comment: Ultimately, it is God's purpose to put resurrected Christians in charge of the entirety of the universe! We will be ruling over all of God's creation as members of the God Family throughout all eternity! No, the idea that a Christian's reward is "going to heaven" is far short of the reality of our true reward. God has promised us an eternal, abundant life of challenge, creativity and achievement that excels man's limited ability to comprehend!