

## Chapter Three - Part Two

### Rewards or Loss

#### *(Continuation of the Prologue)*

After Jacob (Brave Heart) was found worthy at the Judgment Seat of Christ, he leaves the throne room and enters the kingdom. He is immediately escorted to the wedding hall where John the Baptist is there waiting for him along with others who will make up the bride.

As he enters the kingdom he wonders how many more will be entering behind him. He is overwhelmed with joy! As he glances down at himself he realizes he is now enswathed in glory, gleaming like the rays of the sun. He feels amazing as he comes to a thorough understanding of Paul's words to the Christians in Philippi when he wrote,

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20, 21).*

He feels free from mental and physical pain, that which he had endured on earth. All that he feels now is joy within, and his body feels light and airy but full of strength and power. He is perfect in every way now, and ready to serve the Lord.

John glances at Brave Heart and says,

"Wait here, and when the marriage supper is set up, it will be two thousand three hundred days from now on the Sabbath. But for now, Christ our Lord will begin with the opening of the seals as we witness the beginning of tribulation on earth, such as never before."

Brave Heart asks,

"What is it that I should do until then?"

John replies,

"As a friend of the Bridegroom, I have been appointed to arrange the preliminaries of the wedding, to manage the wedding, and to preside at the wedding feast. Follow me and we will begin preparing for the marriage supper as we wait for the rest of the bride. After the wedding, you will be preparing for your rule over the cities of the earth in accordance with the Lord's instructions. But first, He must leave for a short while to conquer the nations and the beast on the earth. Then He will return and your reign will begin. Congratulations! Rejoice over your reign in the kingdom!"

With many questions floating in his mind, Brave Heart asks,

"Thank you, and may I ask how many others will be attending?"

John answers,

"Christ is the Judge, many were called, but few will be chosen."

During the next two days, other overcomers arrive at the wedding hall, assisting with the preparation of the wedding feast. On the third day, the commencement of the opening of the seals is ready to begin.

The multitudes enter the throne room of God. He who sat on the throne is like a sardius stone in appearance, like the rays of the sun. Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones are twenty-four elders seated, clothed in white robes with crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeds lightening's, thundering's, and voices. Seven lamps of fire are burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.



Twenty-four Elders (above) and Crown (below)  
The holy angels will relinquish their crowns to Christ for His bride



Then the twenty-four elders fall down before God in the throne room of heaven where He is seated and they worship Him, and they cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

In the right hand of God who sat on the throne is a scroll written inside and on the back, which is sealed with seven seals. And when Christ the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, takes the scroll out of the right hand of God, four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sing a new song, saying,

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

Afterwards, many angels who are around the throne, the number of them are ten thousand times ten thousand, and then thousands of thousands, say with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Then the Lamb opens the first seal; and one of the four living creatures says with a voice like thunder,

"Come and see."

Brave Heart and the multitudes could see the Antichrist conquering with the spirit of delusion throughout all the nations of the world. This is the beginning of sorrows. The Tribulation has begun. Antichrist makes a covenant of peace with Israel and they begin rebuilding the Holy Temple. The Jewish leaders bring into effect the Levitical laws and sacrifices

associated with the Temple. There is much chaos in the world and everyone, rich and poor, small and great are looking to the Antichrist to bring peace and prosperity. Three and a half years have just gone by.

Ensuing, the Lamb opens the second seal. Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel by bringing an end to sacrifice and offering. He enters and damages the Temple, placing his image in it for all to worship or be killed. War, bloodshed and killing are rampant as the Antichrist seeks to slay the Jewish people. This is the commencement of the Great Tribulation. The Jewish people are told to run for their lives, to flee to the mountains where God has prepared a safe haven for them. Brave Heart watches intensely as he remembers reading about this so many times.

As the Lamb opens the third seal, there is complete silence in the throne room. A drought strikes the lands, therefore prices for wheat, barley and produce is extremely high. After much war and death, the aftermath is worldwide famine. Antichrist takes control of the currency, the food and the people as he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead in order that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark of the beast.

When He opens the fourth seal, some of the witnesses cry as they see widespread death on earth. This is the inevitable consequence of the first three seals: killing, extreme famine and pestilence. Brave Heart watches intensely at the horrific scene that is taking place on earth. This Holocaust is far worse than the last. Millions of Jews are being taken captive and sold as slaves to the nations worldwide and millions of others are slaughtered.



The Great Tribulation  
(Israel and the Gentile Nations)



Christ opens the fifth seal and everyone in the throne room can see under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for their testimony. They cry out to God with a loud voice to give vengeance on the wicked. Each martyr is given a white robe and told to rest until God's appointed time. His vengeance will come in His perfect time.

The sixth seal opens and there is a great earthquake [*shaking of nations*], signifying the collapse of the governments of the earth which marks the near end of the world. The nation's leaders watch the desolation of their commerce and power. There is complete destruction of governments worldwide. God avenges the saints who were slain by those who worshipped Antichrist as He releases demons from the bottomless pit to torture them. Others hide in mountainous caves and rocks, but no matter how strong and mighty their defense, they cannot stand. As these judgments occur, many people continue to curse God, refusing to repent.

The overcomers witnessing all of this in the throne room in heaven are so thankful to God that they are safe in the kingdom. One overcomer is astonished with the people's actions, saying,

"Why don't the men on earth repent?!"

But God has put it in the people's hearts to be deceived by the beast. At this time the Jewish people cry out to the Lord in repentance and He hears their cry. Angels are instructed to remove any hindrance that prevents the nations and the Antichrist from moving into Israel, to prepare for the battle of Armageddon in which Satan, the beast and the false prophet persuade the kings of the whole world to battle against Israel. The armies of the world are being gathered by demonic spirits in an attempt to destroy Christ, His army of angels and the nation of Israel. The Son of Man is now preparing for His second return to earth to battle against them and to redeem Israel.

...Meanwhile, in the heavenly throne room, the time has come for the wedding to begin.

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fall down and worship God who sat on the throne, saying,

"Amen! Alleluia!"

Then a voice came from the throne, saying,

"Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

A great multitude responds, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thundering, saying,

"Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready."

And to the bride it is granted that she be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. In unison they all stand and proclaim,

"Blessed are we who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"

Each overcomer's new name is announced and presented to Christ as His bride. As each one walks up to the throne, colorful lights are shining everywhere and the angels are playing beautiful music. All of the bride watch in amazement!

The wedding feast is celebrated for several days, with singing, dancing and conversing. On the last day, the Bridegroom says,

"Rest, for my army of angels and I will go to conquer the kings of the earth and the beast, and then I will return. Be prepared to rule and reign over the cities of the earth."

The bride follows Christ to the great kingdom hall of many rooms where they will dwell. The construction of its wall is of jasper; and the hall is pure gold, like clear glass. There is no need of the sun or moon or any other form of light to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord illuminates it. And the bride shall walk in its light with the Bridegroom forever.

Meanwhile, the servant who lost his inheritance had a different fate awaiting him when he was thrust out into outer darkness, bound hand and foot. While the whole kingdom inside is brilliantly lit with the presence of the Lord, outside is total darkness where the unfortunate man has been cast. There is no joy or peace, but weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth at being deprived of the pleasures forfeited. What utter regret and sorrow! He failed to have his soul saved and will now have to remain outside the kingdom for one thousand years in darkness. And many, many others are now following the footsteps of this unworthy servant.

When the massive gates of the kingdom are shut behind them, many continue to stand there for days knocking at the door and saying,

"Lord, Lord, open for us!"

And the Lord answers,

"I do not know you."

Then one unworthy servant says,

"Lord, Lord, have I not prophesied in Your name, and have I not diligently attended Your house of worship on behalf of myself and my family?"

And then the Lord answers,

"I tell you I do not know you; depart from Me, you worker of iniquity."

The others behind him begin to weep and wail with despair. They all cry out,

"Lord, Lord, save us from this misery of darkness!"

Once again, they are rejected from entering the kingdom for one thousand years until the Eternal Ages begin.

As Christ prepares His return to earth, four angels are instructed to stand at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds, to protect the judgment from harming the 144,000 Jews who are to be sealed with God's name on their foreheads. Then, multitudes from the Great Tribulation appear in the throne room of God. In view of the great loss of life during this time period, martyrdom was their means of escape.

Then one of the elders said,

"One has asked, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and from where did they come from?' I replied that these are the ones who came out of the Great Tribulation, and who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

Christ then proclaims,

"Behold, I am coming as a thief! Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walks naked and they see his shame! My Hour has come. My Day has arrived!"

During the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, the power of the unholy trinity (Satan, Antichrist and the false prophet) is revealed upon earth. Satan (the dragon) gives his power, his throne and his great authority over Gentile world power to the Antichrist (the beast from the sea) and to the false prophet (the beast from the earth). The two beasts form an alliance of political and religious power to deceive all who dwell on the earth. Antichrist is given a voice speaking great things and he is given authority to rule over every nation. The false prophet exercises all of the authority of Antichrist in his presence and convinces many to worship the Antichrist.

The false prophet performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven onto earth in the sight of men. He tells the earth dwellers to make an image of the Antichrist who was wounded by the sword and lived. Then the false prophet is granted power from Satan to give life and speech to the statue. The statue will then cause many to be killed who will not

worship him. Furthermore, he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead so that no one will be able to buy or sell except those that have the mark of the Antichrist. This gives rise to the wrath of God as He makes ready to pour out His vengeance from heaven.

The reaping of the earth's harvest is ready to commence. Many followers of the beast will be killed and Christ will recover the remnant of His people who are left from the four corners of the earth.

An angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every person on earth, says with a loud voice to the saints,

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

The bride of Christ, composed of all overcomers including Brave Heart, are ready for their Bridegroom to begin His reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. For the last seven years, the bride has been preparing to rule and reign according to the Lord's instructions. Now she will watch as the Lord battles Satan and his army on earth.

Just then the gates to the throne open and Christ rides in on a white horse. The angels and the twenty four elders fall down and worship Him, saying,

"Amen! Alleluia! Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

Brave Heart and the rest of the bride rise and with a great voice shout,

"Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory!"

As he sees the heavens open, Brave Heart says,

"Awesome is our God! In righteousness He judges and makes war!"

The Lord's eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many crowns. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And the armies of angels in heaven follow Him in white horses.

Christ returns to the earth with His angelic army, gathers together the whole house of Israel from the four corners of the world and brings them back to their land. The eyes of Israel now perceive and they now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. An angel standing in the sun cries with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven,

"Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, to feast on the carcasses of the armies who are against Christ."

Antichrist, the kings of the earth and their armies are gathered together ready to make war against Christ and His army. With great wrath, they march towards each other. Upon Christ's fierce command and His rod held high, Christ's army captures the Antichrist along with the false prophet and both are cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. Those who compose the rest of the army of Antichrist are slain with the sword which proceeds from the mouth of Christ, and all the birds are filled with their flesh. The kingdoms of men have been brought down.

A third angel comes down from heaven, holding the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He lays hold of Satan and casts him into the bottomless pit with the other fallen angels, locks him up, and sets a seal on him, so that he should no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished.

Then, Christ returns to His kingdom wearing the diadems, crowns that were taken from Satan and the other fallen angels. He sits on His throne to commence judgment on the martyrs coming out of the Tribulation. Many of them had been tortured and slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. Others were slaughtered because they had not worshiped the Antichrist or his image, and had not received his mark. And they are awarded the honor and privilege to live and reign with Christ for one thousand years.



CHRIST'S RETURN/BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON



Then Christ opens the seventh seal, and there is complete silence in heaven for about half an hour. Seven angels stand before God, and they are given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, comes and stands at the altar. He is given much incense, which is the prayers of the saints, and offers it upon the golden altar that is before the throne. And from the angel's hand the smoke from the burning incense ascends before God! The angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar, and throws it to the earth. And there are noises, thundering, lightning, and an earthquake. This marks Christ's completion of the redemption of the inheritance.

A loud voice is heard from the throne out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, proclaiming,

"It is done!"

Following this, Christ commences the ceremony of the crowning of His bride. The multitudes gather together in front of the throne of God. One by one, Christ announces their rewards and instructions of rulership. As each overcomer steps up to the throne, an angel places a *stephanos*, a victor's crown, on the overcomer's head.

It is at this moment that Christ joyfully cries out,

"Brave Heart, come, servant of Mine."

Brave Heart responds,

"In Your service, my Lord and King!"

Christ proceeds,

"Today, I am awarding you rulership over five cities on earth. The cities are in the North and the East. You shall keep order and peace amongst the people of these cities as you rule over them. You shall be the king-priest of these cities, governing with wisdom and power. You shall shepherd the flock and teach them My commands of righteousness, love and peace. I shall be with you always and you shall possess the throne with Me. I will give you

to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God and this will give you wisdom to rule effectively. Your reward is the crown of life, the crown of righteousness, and the crown of rejoicing. Joy, peace and love shall follow you all the days of your immortal life. Congratulations My friend, I love you!"

Just then one of the angels comes up and places the crowns on Brave Heart, each crown placed on top of the other.

Brave Heart joyfully cries,

"I love you, my Lord! I will serve You with all my best. Thank You for Your grace and blessings. Glory to You in the highest!"

Brave Heart is filled with emotion, his spiritual body feels powerful. He is so amazed at everything that is happening to him. He thinks that nothing can be compared to this experience.

As the members of the bride receive their crowns and Christ's name written on them, they all sit on their royal chairs.

Then, Christ stands to make an announcement, saying,

"Upon this throne of Mine I will order and establish My kingdom with judgment, justice and peace from this time forward even forever. And you, My bride, God's firstborn sons, will perform this with Me. And of the increase of My government and peace, there will be no end. This work of righteousness will produce peaceful quietness and assurance forever. You will dwell in serene and secure dwellings. From this day forward, you shall be kings and priests. You shall rule over the cities to which you have been assigned and I will be with you forevermore. They will hear your voice and follow your instruction as you establish peace and righteousness upon the earth. In doing so, you will be serving Me."

There is complete silence in heaven as all listen intensely to the Lord's voice. He continues on saying,

“The twelve apostles will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel from heaven. The tribes will dwell on My holy mountain and in My holy city of Jerusalem, a city that no longer shall be subject to destruction. I have set up My throne there, the throne of David, and I will be with My people Israel forever. Therefore, go all you saints and be blessed, for your days will be as the number of the stars in heaven.”

The bride cheers,

"Alleluia! Honor and glory be to our Lord God in the Highest forever and ever!"

Every day thereafter, Brave Heart exercises his rule bringing order, love and peace among the people in the cities that were assigned to him. He counsels and rules over them daily through his spirit. Since Satan is no longer on the earth to deceive and promote evil, there is peace and harmony among the nations. The twelve tribes of Israel increase and multiply throughout the years and although there is peace among the nations, sin remains a factor among the people. Some choose to believe in the Lord and others do not. Therefore, God's final plan is yet to be carried out. He will release Satan once again after the thousand years is finished, and then, the final battle will take place.

*(The above Prologue Presentation will be continued in Chapter 4)*

What an awesome and glorifying picture this presents for those Christians who overcome, but what a horror for Israel and the Gentiles to be present in the midst of the Great Tribulation on earth. A *greater* tragedy is the reality that many Christians will be faced with on that Day in heaven — the fact that those who are deemed unworthy (non-overcomers) will face God's disapproval and judgment by being placed in outer darkness for one thousand years!

However, these unworthy servants will not be left outside forever. After one thousand years, the light will appear again, their bands will be loosed and life will resume, but they will have missed the joyous wedding festivities forever.

**Psalm 88:12-14** reflects the plea of these unworthy servants while they remain in darkness:

*Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*

*But to You I have cried out, O Lord, and in the morning my prayer comes before You.*

*Lord, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?*

Contrary to what many theologians teach today, Scripture clearly reveals that there will be a “*just recompense of reward.*” Each and every Christian will receive a just payment comparable to whatever services he rendered or failed to render to the Lord during his mortal life. And this means that there will be rewards and losses, depending on determinations made at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

*For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”*  
**(Matthew 16:26, 27)**

Paul spoke of the goal of receiving a prize from God for winning the race. The prize is the reward for victory. What is the prize? The prize is the *upward call* to enter the kingdom in glory. The prize then is ruling and reigning with Christ Jesus in the kingdom of heaven. Paul does not say that he is pressing on for the call of God but rather for the *prize of that higher calling*. This prize is determined at the Judgment seat of Christ, which is the place of reward.

*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* **(Philippians 3:14)**

Paul gave his entire life to Christ and his goal was to be prepared for the Judgment seat so that he would be able to enter the future kingdom. He referred to this goal as running a race, the race for the crown.

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.*

*And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. (1 Corinthians 9:24)*

What does it take to win a race in any sport?

- 1) A passion for the sport (the Word of the kingdom)
- 2) Dedication to train for the game (the race of the faith)
- 3) A burning desire to win the prize (the upward call to enter the kingdom; the hope of glory)

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he drew a comparison between the Christian life and a sport's competition. He knew that if he faithfully imperishable crown for his service. Paul provides an example of the champion-mindset required to win the race:

*Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:26)*

Paul did not run the race with uncertainty; he knew exactly what his goal was and he understood how to achieve victory. Like an athlete preparing for a race, he also had to discipline his body [sacrifice his fleshly desires] daily in order to allow the Spirit to successfully work through him. Paul did not assume that he would win, so he continued to discipline himself, to motivate himself, to strive for the crown. And this is what it takes for every Christian to win the prize — the saving of his soul.

*...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith....* **(Hebrews 12:1b, 2a)**

At the time of Paul's death, he knew that he had lived for Christ, had kept the faith and that he would receive the reward.

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.* **(2 Timothy 4:7, 8)**

The Greek word for *reward* is “*misthos*” (Strong’s #G3408) meaning “a payment for service or wages,” good or bad. Therefore, a Christian’s reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ will depend on his service during his mortal life. Good works done according to the Holy Spirit will earn a good reward; however, bad works done in the flesh earn a bad reward, which is actually a loss of reward. Throughout Scripture, God reveals that He will distribute these wages at the Judgment Seat of Christ and that they will commensurate according to His children’s labor.

*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”* **(Genesis 15:1)**

*“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”* **(Revelation 22:12)**

All Christians will receive their due reward, whether good or bad, depending on their deeds during their lifetime.

*Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.* **(1 Corinthians 3:8)**

There will be different levels of reward given and there will be up to five crowns that will be placed on the overcoming Christian, depending on his

works. In recalling Brave Heart's victory, his earning of three crowns as a result of decisions and determinations made by Christ at His judgment seat was awarded for his faithfulness during his mortal life and assured him participation during Christ's millennial kingdom.

During the Millennium, there will be a complete restructuring of authority in both regions of the kingdom, in heaven and on earth. Brave Heart, who is part of the bride of Christ, will be ruling over the Gentile nations of the earth from his heavenly position. The twelve apostles and some of the Old Testament saints will be ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel on earth also from their heavenly position. Remember the martyrs who came out of the Great Tribulation? They also will rule and reign in the heavenly kingdom over the nations on earth during the Millennium.

The crowns of rulership will be received by the bride from the Lord when He returns from His battle on the earth. The Lord will take His diadems (ruling crowns) by force from Satan and then He will begin His reign. The crowns for the bride mentioned in Scripture are *stephanos*, which means "crowns of royalty, or a prize." These crowns will be willingly given up by the twenty-four elders [the angels who did not fall with Satan] at the throne of God and will be given to the bride of Christ. Believers desiring to be a part of the bride of Christ are to work for the following crowns:

*The Crown of Life:* This crown will be given to the believer who endures trials and temptation throughout his life on earth. By remaining patient and faithful through tribulation until death or rapture, the believer will overcome and win the crown of life. God allows trials to test the believer's faith while here on earth in order that he may mature — that he *may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)*

*"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be*

*faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*  
**(Revelation 2:10)**

***The Crown of Glory:*** God guarantees Christians who minister the truth of the Word and who serve Him faithfully, not for monetary gain but freely, eagerly and in righteousness, that they will earn a crown of glory in Christ's coming kingdom.

*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;*

*nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;*

*and when the Chief Shepard appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. (1 Peter 5:2-4)*

*The silver-haired head (mature Christian in the Word) is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness. (Proverbs 16:31)*

***The Crown of Righteousness:*** This victory crown will be given to believers who ran *righteously* during the race of the faith throughout their mortal lives. These believers have looked forward to the prize (entrance into the kingdom) at the end of the race. The goal (to win the race) produces a love for Christ's appearance in the clouds (**1 Thessalonians 4:13ff**). Those who love and eagerly hope for His appearing are those Christians who have a mature knowledge of the Word of the kingdom and who die daily to self in order to attain righteousness. They have kept the faith and finished the race.

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day,*

*and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*  
**(2 Timothy 4:7, 8)**

*The Crown of Rejoicing:* This crown will be given to believers who share the knowledge of Christ's return with other Christians, who then may lead them to a life of faithfulness, eagerly waiting for the Lord. Christians who thus share this mature knowledge of the Word are true *soul-winners*.

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?  
 For you are our glory and joy. (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20)*

In **1 Thessalonians 2:19**, Paul joyfully hopes that he, along with his brothers and sisters in Christ, will have their souls saved and receive the crown of rejoicing at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern...*

*For our citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...*

*Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.*  
**(Philippians 3:17, 20-4:1)**

*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19)*

*...And he who wins souls is wise. (Proverbs 11:30)*

*The Incorruptible Crown:* This crown is awarded to overcomers who will have disciplined their bodies of flesh, bringing them into subjection, so that they may overcome their evilness and unrighteousness during their

mortal lives. Striving to be Christ-like, overcoming the body of flesh, the devil and the world during the believer's mortal life will qualify him for this crown, which will attest to the believer's resurrected body being enswathed in glory.

*And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we for an imperishable [incorruptible] crown.*

*Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

**(1 Corinthians 9:25-27)**

In **Revelation** chapters **two** and **three**, the following rewards are promised to overcomers at the Judgment seat of Christ:

*The Tree of Life:* During the Millennium, the tree of life will be in the midst of the paradise of God. It was originally placed in the midst of the Garden of Eden, and was a tree from which Adam and Eve could eat. There were two trees specifically mentioned in the Garden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both trees were located in the Garden and both produced fruit. The distinction between them was the consequence of eating from them.

The tree of life produced life having to do with rulership and the other produced death. Eating from the tree of life had nothing to do with remaining immortal, for Adam and Eve already possessed immortality from the beginning of their creation, even before the tree of life was offered to them. The tree of life was offered to provide them the wisdom of God to be able to rule over the earth. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was more closely aligned with Satan, who became wise in his own eyes rather than being mindful of the things of God. Therefore, at the judgment seat, Christians who have overcome during their mortal lives will be given access to the tree of life, providing them the wisdom of God and the ability to rule the earth.

*“...To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”*

**(Revelation 2:7b)**

In **Proverbs 3:18-22a**, the Spirit of wisdom is connected to the tree of life. Overcomers who are provided nutrition from the tree of life during the Messianic Era will have the wisdom of God with which to rule and reign with Christ.

*She (wisdom) is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.*

*The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens;*

*By His knowledge the depths were broken up, and clouds drop down the dew.*

*My son, let them not depart from your eyes--keep sound wisdom and discretion;*

*so they will be life to your soul... (Proverbs 3:18-22a)*

**Power over the Nations:** Only overcomers have the promise of being coheirs with Christ. They will be given power to rule and reign over the Gentile nations of the earth for one thousand years. They will be assigned certain cities to rule over, and those who are rewarded higher positions will be awarded more than others.

*“And he who overcomes, and keeps my works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations--*

*He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels--” (Revelation 2:26, 27a)*

**The Morning Star:** For the overcomers, Christ promises to give the morning star.

*“...and I will give him the morning star.”*  
**(Revelation 2:28)**

A “star” in Scripture may refer to angels (**Revelation 1:20**), to men (**Revelation 12:1**) or to Christ Himself (**Revelation 22:16**) in positions of authority. In this context, it is referring to the covering of glory that Christ possesses. When the rule over the earth is transferred from angels to men, overcomers will be in a position to possess the same covering of glory that enswathed Adam and Eve prior to their fall and that presently covers Christ Jesus.

During the Lord’s Day, the angels (those who did not fall with Satan) will willingly relinquish their crowns before the throne of God (**Revelation 4:10**); then Christ will be in a position to give overcomers the morning star (the covering of glory) in order that they may rule and reign with Him during the Messianic Era.

Christ’s glory is referred to as “the morning star” in **Revelation 2:28**, however we see in **Revelation 22:16**, Christ Himself is referred to as the Bright and Morning Star, the Head of glory.

*“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”* (**Revelation 22:16**)

The “morning star” refers to the overcomer’s share in the glory of Christ during the kingdom age. Believers who overcome will shine brightly in the image and likeness of Christ, sharing in His royal splendor, as portrayed in **Daniel 12:3**:

*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament,*

*And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.*

**Hidden Manna, White Stone and a New Name:** All three of these are rewards that will be given to overcomers who lived by faith during their mortal lives. The hidden manna was the food from heaven given to

sustain Israel in the wilderness. The hidden manna for overcomers during the Messianic Era will be a much better banquet. It will provide a special intimacy with Christ and a supernatural sustenance to enable the overcomers to serve God effectively as co-rulers in Christ's kingdom. The white stone will be given as a symbol of victory for the overcomer who is indeed victorious in his race of the faith. Along with this, a new name [such as Brave Heart] will be given, which will identify the overcomer's distinctive character. This new name will not be known to anyone except to the overcomer who receives it and the Lord Himself who gives it, indicating the special relationship between the two.

*“...To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”*  
**(Revelation 2:17b)**

*White Garment, Book of Life, and Confession of one's name before the Father and His angels:* The overcomer will wear a white linen garment before entering the wedding banquet. It symbolizes the overcomer's righteous acts and faithful service to the Lord during his mortal life, allowing him entrance into the kingdom as part of the bride of Christ. The overcomer's name is promised to be in the Book of Life, which pertains to the salvation of the soul, where the overcomer's name and works will not be erased, but remembered and honored. And Christ will honor overcomers by confessing their names before His Father and His Father's angels.

*“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”* **(Revelation 3:5)**

*Pillar in the temple of God, and the names of God, the New Jerusalem and Christ's new name:* For the overcomer, Christ Jesus will place him in a high position in God's presence and write on him three names: the name of God, the city of God, and Jesus' new name, all three recognizing the overcomer's ownership, citizenship, and his association with the ultimate rulers and the governing center of the universe.

*“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” (Revelation 3:12)*

***Sit with Me on My throne:*** The Lord promises to share His throne with the overcomers. Those who share Christ's sufferings while on Earth will experience a victory similar to His in the future. As we see in **1 Peter 1:11b**, suffering precedes glory:

*...the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

Just as Christ suffered and overcame in order to sit down with the Father on His throne, Christians who faithfully endure through their suffering will likewise be granted permission to sit with Christ on His throne.

*“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Revelation 3:21)*

In light of the splendor and glory that awaits those who overcome, we must realize that now is the time to take His Word seriously and devote our lives to Him. If we do, we will never regret it, for we will know that what He offers is far greater than what the world offers. Even though we are in this world, we are not to be a part of this world. We are to eagerly wait for our true citizenship, which is in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

Scripture indicates that there will be Christians, some of whom may be scholars, teachers and leaders, who seek entrance into the kingdom on their own merit and terms. They take pride in their work and are exalted and honored by man; but at the Judgment Seat of Christ, their works will be consumed in the fire because they were done in the flesh and not in the power of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, there will be those who will enter the kingdom to the great surprise of many. These will be humble men and women who did not have great titles or positions on Earth, they

were not well-known; but their works will be sustained through the fire and be acceptable to God (**1 Corinthians 3:11-15**).

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

Contrary to popular conservative theology, not all Christians will be crowned at the Judgment seat. Unfaithful Christians will experience great loss during the Millennium.

*If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss... (1 Corinthians 3:14, 15)*

The Greek word for "loss" (Strong's #G2210) is *zemioo* and means "to injure, to experience detriment: be cast away, receive damage, suffer loss," which in this case is "the loss of one's soul [life]." This refers to a separation from Christ, which is inextricably linked with one's experiences of joy, peace, love, intimacy, wisdom, and spiritual fulfillment during the Millennium.

This loss is portrayed by Christ as He articulated the account of the "unprofitable servant" (**Matthew 25:30**) who was cast into *outer darkness*, still in heaven, but in obscurity just outside the glory of the kingdom. He will be separated from Christ and will not experience any of the joy and fulfillment of reigning in the kingdom. The expression "*outer darkness*" is used only three times in the Gospel of **Matthew (verses 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)** and simply means "into the darkness, the outer." It describes a place of darkness outside of the light of the kingdom, the conditions in an area apart from the wedding festivities of the bride and Bridegroom.

Just as there will be different levels of rewards at the judgment seat, there will also be different levels of punishment. In the parable of the faithful servant and the evil servant in **Luke 12:35-48**, a word-picture is presented of the Judgment Seat of Christ showing different degrees of punishment for those servants who failed to prepare for the Lord:

*“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk,*

*the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

*And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

*But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:45-48)*

The first servant is consciously a wicked man, an apostate teacher, acting as a servant of the devil rather than of the Lord, as he treated the Lord’s return carelessly and misleadingly. At the Judgment Seat, he will be slain, indicating the severity of this judgment, especially in contrast to the following servants. The Lord orders the second servant to be beaten with many stripes, for even though he knew the Lord’s will, he did not prepare himself or follow His will – he produced no fruit. The third servant is beaten with few stripes even though he did not know God’s will, because his actions still merited stripes, for he did not seek the Lord’s will.

This parable suggests degrees of God’s punishment. In each case, the stewardship of the servant is evaluated. The ignorant are disciplined less and are cast to the outer darkness unbound (**Luke 12:48; Matthew 25:28-30**) ; the wise but disobedient are disciplined moderately and are also cast to the outer darkness but are bound hand and feet (**Luke 12:47; Matthew 22:13**); and the blatantly disobedient are slain (**Luke 12:45; 19:27; Matthew 24:51**) with their portion being appointed with those who are unbelievers of the Word of the kingdom and the hypocrites. All three types of Christians will have forfeited their inheritance and be cast out of the kingdom.

The *blackness of darkness*, also known as *Gehenna*, will be located outside of the kingdom, where darkness will be far greater and

punishment will be administered most severely (**Jude 10-13; 2 Peter 2:17**). This region is set aside for apostate Christians, many who are false teachers, who have fallen away from the faith and speak against the Word of God. Many of these false teachers will deny Christ and the kingdom to come. “Apostasy” means *falling away* (Strong’s #G646); *defection from truth; to forsake God*. These false teachers are not unsaved individuals, but Christians who have rebelled against God’s Word; and, as a result, will be overcome in the blackness of darkness (Gehenna) for one thousand years.

*But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.*

*Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

*These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;*

*raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever* (**Jude 10-13; cf. James 3:1-6**).

“*For they have gone in the way of Cain*” (**Jude 11**) illustrates the practice and teaching that one can obtain soul-salvation by one’s own works (works of the flesh) instead of works of the Spirit. This is what Cain did by bringing an incorrect offering, an offering not in accordance with God’s command. Both were to bring a “first-fruit” or “firstborn” offering to the Lord. Abel’s offering was a sacrifice of “*the firstborn of his flock and of their fat*” (**Genesis 4:4**). His sacrifice was acceptable to God because of His faithful obedience, and he was therefore declared righteous (**Hebrews 11:4**). Cain, however, offered his sacrifice apart from faith, without following God’s instructions. This illustration deals with the salvation of the soul, which requires one to follow God by faith; i.e., simply believing what God has said pertaining to a matter and faithfully

obeying His Word. In doing so, the result will be works executed through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, these apostate teachers then commit “*the error of Balaam for reward.*” This simply means the selling of their ministry for monetary gain. This is the error of many modern day churches and ministries. Their emphasis is upon numbers of “converts,” resulting in monetary gain. They use God’s Word to draw them in, speaking great swelling words to those who have “*itching ears,*” as they constantly appeal for additional funds.

From “*the error of Balaam,*” they continue in their false teaching until “*they perish in the rebellion of Korah.*” Korah was a mighty man of the Levites and was brought near to the Lord to serve in His tabernacle. But Korah had higher ambitions as he wanted to take over the position of high priest from Aaron and the leadership position from Moses. His arrogance pitted him against Moses and against God’s Word. As a result, the earth opened up and swallowed him and his followers alive into the pit, the heart of the earth.

And just as it happened to Korah and his followers, so it will happen to all apostate teachers as they will be slain and cast to Gehenna, the region known as the blackness of darkness.

What is Gehenna? *Gehenna* translated “*hell—age-lasting punishment*” (G1067) was a garbage dump outside the southern wall of Jerusalem. It is known in the Old Testament as the “Valley of the son of Hinnom,” the place where God said He would destroy apostates of His own people Israel. It was here that the people of Judah fell away from God and sacrificed their children as burnt offerings to the god, Baal.

Later, when this valley was demolished, it became a garbage dump where the fires never went out and the worm never dies (**Jeremiah 19:1-19**). In the future, the Lord will slay the apostates and cast them into Gehenna. During the Messianic Era, all will come to worship before the Lord and they will be able to look upon the corpses of these men who have transgressed against Him (**Isaiah 66:23, 24**). It is this same Valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna or Hell*) that Jesus used as a type to warn Christians concerning God’s coming judgment (**Mark 9:42-48**).

In the Book of **Mark**, Jesus warns His disciples about false teachings:

*“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.*

*If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell (**Gehenna**), into the fire that shall never be quenched --- where *‘Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.’* (**Mark 9:42-44**)*

God uses types (examples that picture the reality) and their antitypes (the reality itself) throughout His Word. The Valley of the sons of Hinnom (Gehenna) was used as a type for that which would portray the future judgment of apostate Christians — the antitype of which is *the lake of fire*.

The term, “*the second death*” is mentioned in the letter to the Church in Smyrna, in **Revelation 2:11**. This expression appears only four times in Scripture, all in the Book of **Revelation (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8)**. The “*second death*” is used in connection with the lake of fire (**Revelation 21:8b**). In **Revelation 20:14**, this expression is associated with the unsaved; but, in the other three passages, it is contextually used pertaining to those who are saved. God prepared the lake of fire following the fall of Satan and a third of the angels that followed him (**Matthew 25:41**), a fall having to do with his arrogant quest for usurping the throne of God — thus, having to do with regality. It will be a permanent abode for all who have refused Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary for their eternal salvation. It will also be the Millennial abode for the saved, those with saved spirits but who have rejected God’s plan for the salvation of their souls, a plan having to do with their future regality during the Messianic Era. Therefore, the “*second death*” in the “*lake of fire*” will be assigned to fallen man — both the saved and unsaved.

Following determinations at the Judgment seat of Christ, blatantly evil, non-overcoming Christians and apostates will be hurt by the “*second death*” and be cast to the “*lake of fire*” **during** the Millennium. At the end of the Tribulation, they will be joined by the beast and the false prophet. Unsaved mankind, after facing the Lord at the Great White

throne judgment, will be permanently hurt by the “*second death*” in the “*lake of fire*” *after* the Millennium.

Every man will be resurrected in his own company and be judged in his own company. Saved and unsaved man therefore will form separate companies and will be judged at different times. The judgment of the saved will transpire at the Judgment Seat of Christ prior to the Messianic Era, while the judgment of the unsaved will be at the Great White Throne of God at the end of the Messianic Era, but previous to the opening of the Eternal Ages.

In **Matthew 25:31-46**, Christ reveals the judgment of the “nations” (living Gentiles) at the time of His return at the end of the Tribulation. Christ judges and separates them into two groups —the sheep and the goats. Since He will be judging both of them at the same time, it is obvious that both belong to the same “class,” *saved* individuals who will come out of the Tribulation. The “*sheep*” are allowed to “*inherit the kingdom*” but not so with the “*goats*.” The goats on the left are cast to the “*everlasting* [Greek: *aionian*, actually age-lasting i.e. millennial] *fire*” that has been prepared for the devil and his angels (**vv. 34, 41**). This judgment of the “*goats*” has nothing to do with eternal verities, but with millennial verities — *the thousand year reign of Christ*.

Experiencing the **second death for the saved** will be experiencing the death of their souls, being cast into the lake of fire during the kingdom age — for one thousand years.

The **second death for the unsaved** will be experiencing death and being cast into the lake of fire at the beginning of the Eternal Ages — forever.

Our first death relates to the death of the spirit in Adam, since all of mankind is *born dead in trespasses and sin*. But for redeemed man, who is made alive in the spirit, the second death is an entirely different manner. Redeemed man is no longer associated with Adam and the possibility of him being hurt by the second death will be a different matter from that of unredeemed man. Experiencing the second death for a redeemed person will affect his inheritance into the kingdom during the Messianic Era; this for failing to recognize and realize his calling; but this judgment will *not* affect his eternal salvation during the Eternal Ages which will follow. On

the other hand, for unredeemed man, the second death can only relate to his eternal damnation through-out the Eternal Ages, since, because of his rejection of Christ, his spirit has never been made alive, but remains *dead in trespasses and sin*.

For the non-overcoming Christian, whether he is cast into outer darkness, blackness of darkness, Gehenna, furnace of fire or lake of fire (*all referring to a region outside of the kingdom with different degrees of punishment*), the age to come will be a dreadful and sorrowful time. The non-overcomer will not be in the presence of the Lord nor will he possess the glory of the Lord, as we see noted in **2 Thessalonians 1:9, 10**:

*These (non-overcomers) shall be punished with everlasting (age-lasting) destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe (belief in the coming kingdom), because our testimony among you was believed.*

Although this *just recompense* is not forever, it *will* last one thousand years. I am sure that we can agree it is not a place we want to be. Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things that we have just read.

Anything that we gain in this world for ourselves (fleshly desires) is temporary and profits nothing, but will only bring destruction. We are taught by the world that our value should be based on self-achievements. God says this is vanity and chasing after the wind. However, what you do in this world for the glory of God will profit you a hundredfold in the coming age, the Messianic Era. It is not too late to renew our minds and adjust our lives for God, but it will be too late when we appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. And the time is close at hand.

*And behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, and the Last. (Revelation 22:12, 13)*