

# THE REWARD FOR BELIEVERS

## MATHEW 19:27–30

### *Introduction*

Peter’s question is often misunderstood. Peter was not being mercenary; he needed assurance. He wanted to make sure that he and the other disciples were *really saved*. Anyone would need assurance after what Jesus had just said: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mat 19:21).

Few sell everything and give it all away (v. 21), and few, whether rich or poor, control their dreams and urges to have more (see note, Mark 10:25). The disciples, as all honest men, knew this. They also knew the extreme demands Christ was making to be a true follower of Christ. They, unlike so many of us in our attempts to soften His words, understood exactly what He was saying. The extremity of His words was shocking. They could not see how anyone could be saved, and the answer Christ gave to their question about salvation said nothing to give them personal assurance: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (v. 26).

The disciples sensed a deep need for assurance. Had they done enough and given up enough? They thought so and were almost sure they had, but had they?

Somewhat meekly Peter said, “Lord, we have left everything to follow you! We have surrendered all to you. What then will there be for us? Shall we receive eternal life?” Christ used Peter’s question to teach a wonderful truth. They and all who followed Him could rest assured — they would be enormously rewarded.

Note the Lord’s assuring words: “I tell you the truth, that you will also sit on twelve thrones....And everyone who has left [all]...will inherit eternal life” (vv. 28-29).

- I. The two essentials for reward (v. 27).
- II. The apostle’s reward: will reign and rule with Christ (v. 28).
- III. The believer’s reward: will receive great benefits (v. 29).
- IV. The believer’s judgment: a shocking surprise — execution of perfect justice (v. 30).

### **I. *Mathew 19:27 The Two Essentials for Reward***

There are two essentials for reward.

1. A person must leave or forsake all. What is meant by this? Peter and some of the other disciples had families, and they readily met the needs of their families (Mat 8:14). Therefore, *leaving or forsaking all* does not mean deserting and shirking our day-to-day responsibilities to our families. What *leaving all* means is to renounce and to relinquish all — to give up all unreservedly. It means that a person takes care of his family, yes; but beyond that, he uses what he has to meet the needs of a desperate
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world. It means that a person serves and puts Christ before all, including family and friends. It means that a person *leaves behind all sinful behaviour* such as dirty habits, evil associations, crooked ways, off coloured jokes and curse words. It means that we allow nothing to interfere with serving Christ. It means to put *following Christ* first. When we put Him first, we discover a wonderful truth: life becomes balanced. All other things, including family, fall into their proper place; and life becomes a most enriching experience (even if a person's family rejects him).

2. A person must follow Christ (see *Cross and Discipleship*, Luke 9:23). A person who really follows Christ has no sense of regret and no desire to complain. He is truly a new creation: "the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17). He is satisfied and complete (Col 2:10).

**Mark 10:28** Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

**Luke 5:27-28** After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him,

**Luke 9:23-24** Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

**Luke 14: 33** "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

**Luke 18:29-30** "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

**Phil 3:8** What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

**Thought 1.** We face two great dangers that can lower our reward.

- 1) Not leaving or forsaking all for Christ: hanging on to some things whether behaviour, habit, relationship or possession.
- 2) Super-spirituality: after forsaking all for Christ, there is always the danger of thinking that we have given up and sacrificed more than others. Several areas in particular lend themselves to spiritual pride...
  - suffering
  - financial and benevolent gifts
  - ministry and ministerial position
  - service and works
  - talents and spiritual gifts
  - being saved from the depth of sin

**Thought 2.** Some attempt to bargain with God. This is not to be. We are to go ahead and leave all, trusting and following Christ (2 Cor 6:17-18; 1 John 2:15-16).

## II. *Mathew 19:28 Reward of Reign and Rule with Christ*

The apostles were to be wonderfully rewarded. They were to receive a great honour — the honour of ruling and reigning with Christ Himself. Note that Christ told them three things. (See *Judging, Eternal Life*, Mat 19:28.)

=> When they would reign with Him.

=> Why they would reign with Him.

=> Whom they would govern and direct in their reign.

The word *renewal* (*paliggenesia*) means recreation, restoration, renovation, new birth. The word is used one other time in the New Testament referring to the new birth of an individual (Tit 3:5). Here Christ uses the word to refer to the “restoration of everything” (Acts 3:21), a period of time in the future when He will set up the new order of things under His personal rule and reign (see Rom 8:19-23; Isa 11:6-9). That day is often called the day of redemption or referred to as the Kingdom of God. (See note and *Redemption*, Eph 1:7; *Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat 19:23-24.)

Note several things.

1. “The renewal of all things” is in the future. Christ did not say “you who have followed me in the renewal,” but “you who have followed me, in the renewal when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne.” The period of time is “when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory” — a time out in the future.
2. Christ said that the apostles would be rewarded with twelve thrones, each one governing one of the twelve tribes of Israel. When were they to govern? “In the renewal,” when the new order of things are set up under the rule and reign of Christ. But when is the new order of things to be? There are two possible answers: either during the millennial reign of Christ (see *Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat 19:23-24; *Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ*, Rev 20:4-6) or during the new heavens and earth (Rev 21:1f; see 1 Cor 15:23-28).

There are three passages in which Christ deals with the renewal as predicted here.

**Mat 19:28** Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

**Mat 20:21, 23** “What is it you want?” he asked. She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

**Luke 22:28-30** You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The fulfilment of this promise seems to be the Messianic kingdom or millennial reign of Christ on earth. This seems to be the way Christ's promise to Israel will be fulfilled.

**Isa 1:26** "I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City."

3. It should be noted, however, that some find great difficulty in saying there is *ever again to be a distinction between Jew and Gentile*. They say that Christ came to bring peace to all men and between all men, breaking down the wall of partition between all. They say that the great weight of Scripture is opposed to there ever again being a distinction between Jew and Gentile. This interpretation simply says that when Christ returns, that is it; the end of time will be at hand. When He returns, He sets up His eternal reign and rules forever. Therefore, the apostles' rule and reign refers to the church, that is, to spiritual Israel or to the true Israel of God (Gal 6:15-16; see Rom 2:28-29).
4. Christ said He would reward the apostles with a *particular honour*. Why? The apostles believed and followed Christ in the embryonic or beginning stage of Christianity. They clung to their belief and endured in the face of unbelievable odds. Just imagine!

- => Imagine standing before a man who looks just like all other men, merely a man, and believing that man to really be the *Son of God*.
- => Imagine clinging to and continuing to follow Christ when everyone else had turned away from Him (see John 6:67).
- => Imagine following immediately upon the heels of the risen Lord and being instantly responsible for reaching the world. (No wonder God had to plan for His Spirit to infill the disciples as He did on Pentecost and to live within our bodies as He does. See notes, 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20.)
- => Imagine continuing on and on, trying to be obedient and to reach more and more despite unbelievable odds and having to constantly face the harassment of their fellow citizens, the Judaizers or religionists.
- => Imagine confronting and enduring through unbelievable threats and persecution launched from both an immoral government and a man-corrupted religion that reacted fiercely against those who differed with it.

The apostles not only were responsible for more and faced more than most of us will ever know but they also were responsible for and faced more than we can ever imagine (see 1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 11:24-28).

**Thought 1.** There are two renewals.

- 1) The renewal of a person's life: a rebirth, a recreation of a person's nature and life (see *New Birth*, John 3:1-15).
- 2) The renewal of the universe: a remaking of heaven and earth (Rom 8:21-23; 2 Pet 3:10-13; 21:1).

## MATHEW 19:28 JUDGING (KRINO); ETERNAL LIFE

*Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Mathew 19:28*

To judge, govern, direct; to administer affairs, supervise and oversee. The assignment of responsibility, of duties, of work to be done is being taught here. There is to be *judging*, that is, governing, giving direction and supervision and oversight throughout eternity. Christ told the apostles that they would govern and oversee Israel. Paul said that believers would direct and oversee the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3). All this activity and responsibility, of course, is under the direction of Christ.

For some unknown reason we so often picture *eternal life* as some dreamy sleep or semi-conscious type of existence. We think of it as some future existence that puts us j on a fluffy cloud upon which we float in an eternal state of inactivity. Why man cannot accept the simple statement of Christ that life is to be eternal is difficult to understand. Eternal life is life that goes on and on. There is, however, one basic difference: life shall be perfected — perfected in body, mind, and spirit. It is life lived in the midst of a new heavens and earth (perfected) — life lived before Christ and responsible to Christ in all that it is assigned (John 3:16; 5:24; Rom 8:19-23; 2 Pet 3:9-18; 1 John 5:11-13; Rev 21:1). □

### III. *Mathew 19:29 Reward of Believers*

The apostles are not the only ones to be rewarded. Every true follower of *Christ* shall be greatly rewarded. Christ said three things about the reward of the believer in this verse.

1. The reason for the reward: the believer is to be rewarded because he has left all; he has given his supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ (see note, Mat 19:27, the two essentials for reward).

Note that the two closest things to a man are named by Christ: his immediate family and his possessions (honour and lands). These are by far the most difficult things to surrender to Christ. Hobbies, habits, pleasures, friends — all can be given up (subjected to Christ) quicker than family or possessions. Note also that Christ began and ended the list with material possessions. How enslaving they are, even more so than family for some persons!

2. The present reward: a hundred times as much. The Gospel of Mark makes it clear that Christ was speaking of present reward (Mark 10:21). No true follower of Christ has ever forsaken anyone or anything and been left alone and destitute by Christ. Christ rewards His true follower many times over. Note: the reward is both human and material.



- a. The human reward is a real and true fellowship among genuine believers. Christ knows when a follower of His has been turned against by those whom Christ loves ever so deeply. Christ knows when to send someone into the life of His own, when to meet the aching need of His follower for true friendship. He more than abundantly meets the need.

*1 John 1:3* We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

*1 John 1:7* But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

*Acts 2:42* They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

*Mat 18:20* For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

*Rom 12:5* So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

*Psa 119:63* I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.

*Mal 3:16* Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

- b. The material reward is the meeting of necessities and whatever else God wants us to have left over so that we can help meet the needs of others.

The idea Christ was conveying is that of perfect material care and security. The very reason we seek and seek is because we are basically insecure and have a basic urge to crave more and more. Craving, greediness, fear, and insecurity are most unhealthy and destabilizing. When we forsake all, genuinely following Christ, He gives us the greatest peace and security possible: Himself and His power to provide for our necessities. We never have to worry or be anxious again (see notes, Mat 6:25-34; Luke 16:10-12. See Mark 10:29-30; Luke 18:28-30; Eph 4:28.) There is much more happiness, joy, peace, security, assurance, confidence, satisfaction, completeness and fulfilment in Christ than in any amount of possessions or worldly companionship and

*Mat 6:33* "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

*John 10:10* "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

*Eph 3:20* Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

*2 Cor 9:8* And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

**Phil 4:19** *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

**2 Pet 1:11** *And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

**Psa 23:5** *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (cp. Psa 36:8)*

**Psa 68:19** *Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.*

**Isa 30:23** *He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows.*

**Joel 2:26** *You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.*

**Mal 3:10** *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*

3. The future reward is eternal life (see *Eternal Life*, John 17:2-3; see *Life in Jesus Christ*, John 1:4; note and *Judgement*, Mat 19:28. See Rom 8:16-18.)

**Mark 10:21** *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

**John 3:15** *That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*

**John 3:36** *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.*

**John 4:36** *Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.*

**John 5:24** *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*

**John 17:3** *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

**Gal 6:8** *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

**Thought 1.** Christ promises to reward His followers presently, reward them with an unbelievable Christian community, fellowship and security. He founded the church to fulfil this promise. The church has a high calling. Imagine, the local church and its

genuine believers are to be as close to one another as families are. The church is to provide a precious fellowship for the alienated, lonely, shy, friendless, and stranger. It is to meet the needs where families fail.

A pointed question: how many churches provide a true fellowship (see *Fellowship*, Acts 2:42)? How often does God have to turn away from local congregations to others in order to meet the needs of a disciple of His?

#### **IV. *Mathew 19:30 The Judgment of Believers***

The Lord's words are clear. There is to be a shocking judgment of believers — the execution of perfect justice. Our judgment, human judgment, is often inaccurate. *Many persons* shall be switched around: many whom we esteemed and rewarded the highest shall be placed last, and many whom we thought weakest and lowest will be placed first. Only God knows the true heart of His servants. We judge and reward...

- by visible works
- by visible morality
- by age and seniority
- by friendliness
- by years as a Christian
- by recognition
- by ability and skill
- by esteem or influence
- by position

However, God sees into the heart of His dear followers, into the heart of every single person; and He shall straighten out the misjudgements of all our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Christ leaves no doubt: the most humble on earth shall be elevated to be the greatest in heaven. It may be a shocking surprise, but there is to be judgment, a just realignment and positioning of believers (see *Judgement Seat of Christ*, 2 Cor 5:10; note, 1 John 3:1-2).

**2 Cor 5:10** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

**1 Cor 3:13-15** *His work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and 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.*

**Luke 1:52** *He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.*

**Luke 6:25** *Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.*

**Luke 16:25** *“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ■*