

## 1 God's Reward Plus Program

- Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

## 2 Scripture

- "Behold, I am coming soon!
- My reward is with me, and I will give to every one according to what he has done.
- I am ...
  - the Alpha and the Omega,
  - the First and the Last,
  - the Beginning and the End.
- "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

## 3 Scripture

- "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.
- I am the Root and the Offspring of David and the bright Morning Star."
- The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"
- And let him who hears say, "Come!"
- Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and
- [W]hoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

## 4 Scripture

- I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book:
  - If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

- And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy,
- God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

## **5 Scripture**

- He who testifies to these things says,
  - “Yes, I am coming soon.”
  - Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.
- Amen.

## **6 Introduction**

- Now we all love being recognized for our achievements, and when these efforts are rewarded
  - with cold, hard cash, or
  - something that enhances our financial opportunities, or
  - increases our discretionary time,
  - we’re thrilled.

## **7 Introduction**

- This is why the business world is deep into “loyalty” programs.
- In fact, 90 percent of companies have some sort of rewards program?
- Of course, all major airlines and hotel chains tout their loyalty plans.
- Fly “X-number” of miles on an airline and get a free roundtrip flight to Hawaii.

## **8 Introduction**

- But smaller fish in the consumer pond are busy, too.
- Shoppers needn't look too far to find "rewards" just for buying things, even necessities.
- Buy groceries at Costco and get cash off your next gas purchase.
- Buy three grandé, iced, sugar-free, vanilla lattes with soy milk, or versions thereof, at the coffeehouse and get one free.

## 9 Introduction

- But not all loyalty programs are created equal.
- Most of them fall into four types:
  - Points-based rewards,
  - Tiered rewards,
  - Pre-Paid rewards, and
  - Value rewards.
- SPOILER ALERT: Which one of these types is not used by God?

## 10 Introduction

- Since the text before us includes some of Jesus' last words to the church and comes at the end of the Bible.
- And since in these words, Jesus explicitly mentions a ceremony in which rewards will be distributed to loyal "consumers"—who have been flying with him.
- Let's look at these loyalty programs and see which ones apply to us.

## 11 Points-Based Rewards

- From our text tonight, we have the last words of Jesus to the church, and the first thing out of his mouth is something about rewards.
- "See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work" (v. 12, emphasis added).

- Rewards, by definition, are favors or perks bestowed based on performance.
- Jesus says as much when he says that his rewards program is based on “everyone’s work.”

## 12 Points-Based Rewards

- 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)
- 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. (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. (2 John 1:8)
- God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” (Romans 2:6 NIV)

## 13 Tiered Loyalty Program

- A tiered loyalty program is a type of membership that offers customers different benefits depending on their rank or the value of the reward.
- These rewards give customers a goal.
- The higher their tier,
  - the more exclusive, and
  - valuable the rewards.

## 14 Tiered Loyalty Program

- Jesus seems to indicate that some rewards will be greater than others.
- Speaking to the farmers and townspeople in the area of Tiberius, Jesus said in his “Sermon on the Mount,”
  - “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (Matthew 5:11)

- Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is GREAT in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12)

## 15 Tiered Loyalty Program

- Jesus could have said that those who are persecuted and reviled will receive an unspecified reward on judgment day.
- In fact, he explicitly says that
  - the reward will be a tier above, a step above
  - a reward, unlike the typical reward received by those who have merely been faithful.
- Throughout Scripture, this reward seems to be linked to suffering.
- Those who undergo suffering for Jesus' sake are, ipso facto, members of a unique club.
- To these sufferers, Jesus will offer "crowns."

### — Imperishable Crown

- Athletes exercise self-control in all things;
  - they do it to receive a perishable garland, but
  - we an imperishable one (1 Corinthians 9:25).
- This crown, or garland, is given to the spiritual athlete who has trained, suffered, and sacrificed to win the race.
- Paul reminds his readers in the previous verse that not everyone wins this prize.
- The winners of an imperishable crown have sacrificed much to compete according to the rules.

### — Crown of Rejoicing

- "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?
  - Is it not you?

- Yes, you are our glory and joy!" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).
- Some Bible teachers refer to this crown as the "Soul Winners' Crown."
- The apostle Paul expected the Thessalonian church to be his "crown of rejoicing" when he gets in line to receive his reward (see the NKJV).

## — Other Crowns

- Crown of righteousness:
  - "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
  - From now on, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).
  - Here, the link between suffering for the gospel's sake and the reward of a crown is explicit.
- Crown of glory: "And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away" (1 Peter 5:4).
- Crown of life: "Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

## — Other Rewards

- Other tiers might include something the apostle Paul called an inheritance.
- For example: "Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).
- And finally, there is a reward level that involves great administrative responsibilities:
  - "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" (Matthew 25:21).

## 16 Pre-Paid Rewards

- In the early 1500s, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk, used to wander from village to hamlet in rural Germany selling indulgences.
- He would set up a theatrical stage and urge the people to buy the indulgences to get their relatives out of purgatory or, in some cases, pre-pay for their own sins.
- He had a little jingle that was so popular that it caught the attention of Martin Luther:
  - "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

## 17 Pre-Paid Rewards

- It doesn't work this way in God's kingdom.
- Paid rewards are the one loyalty program that Jesus doesn't offer.
- Jesus is not going to be bribed.
- Or, conversely, we cannot bribe God
  - for better customer service (answered prayer),
  - a bigger mansion in glory, or
  - the best rewards once we meet our Maker.
- Without true repentance and living a holy life none of these perks are really possible.

## 18 Value-Based Loyalty Program

- According to one source, "The idea behind a value-based loyalty program is to connect with customers on a deeper level.
- It involves donating a percentage of purchases to charity or welfare programs.
- You can offer multiple options for different charities to choose from or have one that genuinely aligns with your customers' values.
- This program doesn't actually reward customers.

- But it holds a special place for them, as the rewards are used to benefit society.

## 19 Value-Based Loyalty Program

- This type of customer reminds us of those who labor in the vineyards of the Lord and do so with no financial interest whatsoever.
- They toil and work in their corner of the world for no other reason than to improve their fellow humans and to serve Jesus, motivated by love and gratitude.
- In this way, they model altruism at its finest and seek no reward.
- In so doing, they may be in line for the greatest rewards of all.

## 20 Considerations

- So, at the very least, the idea of rewards should give every committed Christian pause.
  - How loyal have I been?
  - What is the value of the work I've done?
  - What will be my final evaluation?
- The apostle Paul addresses this in his first letter to the Corinthian church:
  - "If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. If the work is burned, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).

## 21 Sobering Thought

- Paul is saying here is a sobering thought:
  - He knows that there are many Christians who will stand in line on judgment day; some will have very little to show for the time they spend on earth.
  - "The builder (Christian worker) will be saved, but only as through fire."
- In other words,



- like a person fleeing from a burning building,
- they will have nothing more than the smoking clothes upon their backs.
- Moreover, a worker might be so irresponsible that Jesus will turn his back on them entirely and say, "Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:23 NIV)

## 22 Conclusion

- We can do better than this.
- We can do better than wasting our time, resources, and lives on things that do not matter.
- We can build now on a solid foundation with our eyes on eternity.
- And someday, we may hear our Lord say,
  - "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things,
  - I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23).
- Amen.