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Welcome Home, Mister Ambassador

933-A

**Series: Living the End Times:
Once the King Has Come**



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Father, we look for that moment of Your glorious appearing. We await that day when the trumpet of God will sound, and those who are alive and remain will be gathered up together into the heavens, to be swept into the arms of Jesus. May we comfort one another with these words, even as You commanded us. And as we look this morning, Father, at that glorious time still in the future, when we will all stand in Your presence at the Bema Seat, may our hearts be quiet and at rest, and may we think carefully about the priorities of our lives and of our age.

We do pray for those who are sick that You would continue their healing process; for those who are grieving that You would put Your hand upon them and heal them and give them great strength and encouragement. For others even in our midst, and those we do not know about who are struggling with pain and sorrow and fear and grief, we just pray that the Comforter would gather them about in His arms, even this moment.

And now we pray, Father, that the eyes of our hearts might truly be focused on eternity in the next few minutes, and that the glory might be Yours and Yours alone.

Amen.

His name was Benjamin. In many ways, Ben was just like any other ten-year-old boy. He was robust, inquisitive and not without a natural, innate ability to irritate his parents to death. On occasions, and this even happens with boys, he was lovable. At times though, it took all the strength you had just to muster up enough courage to keep him in line. But there was one difference between Ben and the other little boys you might have known. Ben was an American, but he was born to two American parents who were living in a tiny, little country in Eastern Europe. Ben's dad, you see, was working for an American oil company as an engineer, and Ben was being raised far, far, far from home.

So, he was American, but he had never seen America. So,

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he talked and dressed and acted, not like a ten-year-old would in this country, but like all the children did in that tiny, little country where he lived. He had never seen a hot dog. He thought Times Square was a building tool. He thought the Pittsburgh Steelers were a contracting firm. Though he was an American by birth, for all practical reasons, you couldn't tell it.

But something happened to Benny when he was thirteen, something wonderful. His dad was sent home on furlough for reassignment. And Ben, after a brief trauma of reentry into this country, at last became exposed to the customs and cultures of the land he was designed to be a part of. It was like being reborn. Soon he became as American as apple pie. He finished high school, went to college, graduated with honors and received his degree in political science.

Through a series of interesting events, Ben became a part of the diplomatic corps of our country. And surely, within a few years, an amazing thing happened. He was appointed an ambassador, strangely enough, to the very same country he had grown up in as a lad. And as he appeared with all of the other ambassadors who were being sent forth before the Secretary of State, just before he departed, he was given a series of warnings—warnings that every departing ambassador had to listen to. They said this:

- 1- Do not become entangled in the affairs of the land to which you are being sent.
- 2- Always remember, you are an ambassador, not a citizen. Identify with the people, but never lose your identity as an ambassador.
- 3- You are the official representative of your Commander in Chief. The people to whom you go will make their assessments of him by looking at you.
- 4- Do not invest heavily in the economy of the land to which you are being sent. Make your investments in your homeland, where you will one day return.
- 5- And at any time, Mr. Ambassador, you could be called home. The country to which you are being sent may at any moment, be the center of a bloody revolution and when that happens, remember, here is your procedure:
 - a- You will be called home, if possible, just *before* the

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warfare becomes too intense.

- b- There may not be time for you to gather your possessions. Whatever you have accumulated, leave behind.
- c- Upon your return, your Commander in Chief will call you to himself to assess your commitment and reward you accordingly.

6- Finally, remember, the country to which we are sending you, *is not your home*. You are there on assignment. And at any moment, you could instantly be returned to the land of your true citizenship, so *behave accordingly*.

Well, with those clear-cut guidelines, Ambassador Benjamin returned to the land of his childhood, to live now, in that little country, but not to become a citizen of it.

At first, his job was a delight. He was committed to the American way, and he was a walking billboard for the free enterprise system. He was a positive force for democracy and he represented his country well. But as time went on, he began to change. Little by little, he began to adapt once again to the philosophy and culture of the people around him. Maybe you can identify. His friends were the natives of that country. Soon, he met and married a girl who was not only a native, but whose father had been actively opposed to the political things that he stood for. And then, little by little, Ben adopted the religious beliefs of those who were around him. Soon, his duties as an ambassador began to be colored by his intense commitment to the land in which he lived. He began investing his money heavily in business ventures and savings opportunities in the banks of that little country until everything he had was there. He was still an ambassador. He still went around, and he still had his office at the U.S. Embassy, but he dressed like, acted like, worked like and lived like a native, all in contradiction to what he had been told.

Then, one day, it happened. Civil war broke out in that little country, and it was obvious a revolution was imminent. In a matter of minutes, Ben received this wire from the State Department. *“Sending for you and all other American citizens immediately. Stop. Leave all your possessions behind. Stop. You are no longer welcome in that country. Stop. The President will greet you upon your return. Stop.”*

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So suddenly, it happened. Tears and deep sorrow ensued, but Ben was evacuated immediately from the country he had given his life to. He was forced to leave his wife behind. He never saw her again. His investments were confiscated by the new government and destroyed. He had poured all he had into the wrong kingdom. He forgot where his citizenship was. Oh, he had been saved. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they sent for him. But how empty-handed he was.

Once back in Washington, Ben was ushered into the White House, where he and some others who had returned home at the same time were granted an audience with the Commander in Chief. And he gathered all of these ambassadors together for a ceremony. Ben tried to think back over the time he had spent in that little country. What had he done to represent his own kingdom? How faithful had he been? Where were his investments? And suddenly those guidelines came flooding back to his mind and he remembered what he had been taught, but it was too late. They had said:

- Don't become entangled with the affairs of another kingdom.
- Remember, you are an ambassador, not a citizen.
- Remember, they are watching you.
- Don't make your investments in the wrong kingdom.
- At any time, you may be called home to give an account of what you have done.
- When you do, you will be rewarded according to your faithfulness.

You see, Ben had violated every one of those rules. He had lived as a citizen in a land he would one day have to leave. He stood there and said, "What a fool I've been. What a fool."

He was not the only one called home that day. There were dozens of them. And the President went around the room and congratulated each ambassador for their contributions. You could hear him say, "Well done. You've been faithful. Welcome home, Mr. Ambassador. Welcome home." To another he would say, "Well done, you've been faithful in a small responsibility. I'm going to give you a much greater responsibility. Welcome home, Mr. Ambassador."

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But then he came to Ben. He looked down, and his eyes met Ben's and he said, "Ben, here is your certificate that indicates you've been an ambassador. You will always be a citizen of this country. No one will take that from you, but you've missed so much. And now you have so little to show for all those years. I would love to give you a more noble commendation Ben, but," and the President's eyes met his, "you forgot who you were!"

Now, I know what's going through your mind. You're thinking, what a wasted life. He deserved no recognition at all. He was a turncoat, a traitor. How could anyone pretend to be an ambassador representing one country and make all his investments in another? Right? How could anyone who knew he would one day have to give an account to his Commander in Chief, live so carelessly? Right? Before you begin to hang Benjamin, let me remind you, beloved, that you, too, are an ambassador. You, too, were brought up into a world and brought in a world that was foreign to the design of God. And one day something happened, I trust to you. Your original citizenship was reaffirmed, and you were reborn. And your Ambassador in Command began to train you for something special. Before long, you came to realize you had been commissioned as an ambassador for Christ. You were being sent right back to the land from which you came, but now you were being sent as a representative of another kingdom, representing another King. You were to live *in* that kingdom, but not become *of* it.

You were cautioned not to become entangled in the affairs of this world. You were told to remember you are a child of the King. Others were watching you to learn of Him. You were told not to make your investments here; not to lay up treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal (Matthew 6:19).

You were told a revolution would one day be coming—a turbulent upheaval attempting to overthrow the Kingdom of Righteousness. And I trust you were told, that just before the revolution, your Commander in Chief would suddenly send for you and call you home. Once there, you would be sent directly into His presence to give an account of your tour as an ambassador. Without a doubt, you would be rewarded for what you had done.

Before you judge Benjamin, ask yourself, "Am I living as an ambassador *to* or as a citizen *of* this world? Where is my

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allegiance? What occupies my thoughts night and day? What am I investing my money in? What am I investing my time in? What am I investing my influences in? Things I can send ahead to the homeland that will be there when I return, or things that at any time I will have to leave behind when my Commander in Chief sends for me?”

Are you constantly aware that we will all appear, beloved, before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive the rewards for what we have done; that one day, every one of us must give an account of himself to God? Oh, we don't like to think about that. But it's exciting to think about. Are you expecting God to take you in His arms and say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant? Welcome home, Mr. Ambassador.” If not, don't be too hard on Ben.

I trust you remember, we're in the process of lesson three of a series entitled, “Once the King Has Come.” In the last lesson, we looked at the first event on the horizon of the end times, and that is the rapture of the church—in the twinkling of an eye, when Christ will sound the trumpet and we'll hear His voice and He'll gather us together.

This morning we are going to look at the next great event on the horizon of eternity, the Bema Seat or the Judgment Seat of Christ. It, too, is something *every* child of God will experience. So, it ought to affect our attitudes, our actions, and our activities. Our outline:

I- Welcome Home, Mr. Ambassador.

II- God's Rewards Platform. We'll ask ourselves some questions, hopefully with some answers.

A- When?

B- Where?

C- Who?

D- Why?

E- How?

F- Then what?

G- Now what?

As we begin this study of the Bema Seat of Christ—it's perhaps properly pronounced “Vema” but we'll use “Bema” because that's what we've always been used to—it's of primary importance that

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all of us come to realize there may be slight differences of opinion by theologians as to some of the details. But there is little or no argument among most, at least, that the Scripture plainly teaches this *will* happen. It is an absolute promise from a Holy God, and you remember from last week, a God who's Word is both infallible and immutable. It cannot fail, and it cannot change.

Then why isn't it more prominent in our thinking? Why don't we think more constantly about how what we are thinking and doing will affect that day? I believe that the Bible teaches us that Satan has one key goal in mind where the church is concerned, and that's to deceive the Christian. He has one basic question; he asks it over and over, "Hath God said?" Or, loosely translated, "Did He really say that?" So, specific Biblical absolutes, as the years go by, are laid aside as either irrelevant or uncertain; absolutes that were intended to be the very cornerstone of our faith. And this is one of them. The Bema Seat of Christ.

Last week, we looked in detail at what, perhaps, one day very soon will happen; we will be called home. This morning we are going to look at what happens when we get home; when, as ambassadors we are called before the Commander in Chief, to receive the rewards He has prepared for us. We're going to look at what those rewards are, when they will be given, and how they ought to affect our lives.

Question one is, when? When will this take place? When will we all appear before the Bema of Christ? Dr. Pentecost answers that question this way, and I think it's a good answer: "The event takes place immediately following the translation (or the rapture) of the church out of the atmosphere." In other words, just after the rapture comes the Bema Seat. And he gives us some considerations to support this, if you would like to look them up on your own.

1- He quotes Luke 14:14, to explain that the rewards are always associated with the resurrection.

2- When the Lord returns with His bride (the Second Coming), the bride has already been rewarded. He uses Revelation 19:8, as his basis.

3- He gives three passages: I Corinthians 4:5, II Timothy 4:8, and Revelation 22:12, to point out that the rewards are always associated with *that day*, the day in which Christ comes for His own.

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What he is saying is this—and we'll base the rest of our lesson this morning, at least that portion of it—on the fact that the chronological setting of the Bema of Christ is almost certain to be *after* the rapture and *before* the return of Christ with us. If God decides to have it some other time, great! It will be just as neat, just as special, just as dramatic, and no less important. So far as we can tell, it will most likely occur just after we are swept into the heavens to be with the Lord and to meet with our loved ones in the twinkling of an eye.

So much for when. The next question is, where? I think we have answered that as well. If the Bema follows the rapture, when *we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air* (I Thessalonians 4:17), then it's obvious it will take place somewhere in the heavens. This is further substantiated in II Corinthians 5, where Paul is describing these events and he says they will take place when we are *absent from the body and present with the Lord*. So, we don't know where for sure, but let's assume it will be somewhere in the heavenlies.

Question number three is, who? Who will be there? Is it judgment time for all mankind? Is it only for Christians? Will we be judged to see if we are saved? What kind of judgment is this?

We can answer that simply I believe, and most authoritatively, because Scripture is clear as to who will be there. First of all, the Lord will be there. He's going to be the Judge. II Corinthians 5:10, says that this examination will be made *before the presence of the Son of God*. John 5:22, says *all judgment has been committed to the Son*. Christ will be there, and He will have on the robes of the Judge.

Who else will be there? Well, you'll be there, if you're a Christian. I'll be there. The Judgment Seat of Christ is not a time when the lost will be judged. It is not a time of judgment really, at all. The believer will have been judged concerning his salvation, and have been found "in Christ." That's why he was caught up together to be with the Lord.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in
Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

So, the answer is, that the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Bema of Christ will be a time for every Christian to stand before the Lord Jesus. So, we will be there and He will be there.

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from

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the body and to be present with the Lord.

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

For we must all [believers] appear before the judgment seat of Christ, [the Bema] that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (II Corinthians 5:8-10)

We'll look at that in a moment. So, the purpose we will get to, but as for the persons, Christ will be there and we will be there. *Every Christian who has ever lived will be there.* Paul will be there. Moody will be there. Billy Graham will be there and every believer who has ever lived. I only mention this so we will take note of this fact—because sometimes we don't stop to think about it—this is not a casual happening for a select group of saints that God is going to call up out of the confines of heaven and call into a special chamber and give awards to. This is a command performance for every believer who has ever lived. That's you. And the purpose of it will be, not only for you to be there, but for your life to be reviewed in the presence of God with a specific determination in mind, determining what has been "good" or "bad." We're going to look at that in a minute. But for now, let's understand, Jesus will be there, we'll be there and every Christian who has ever lived will be there. So, this is a major happening.

The next question is, why? I mean, why is God convening the biggest church meeting in history, right in the presence of His Son, just after He has swept us up into His arms to spend eternity with Him? Well, it's not to determine our salvation. We just realized that; we're already in heaven. We read in the last lesson in I Thessalonians 4, that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be there. So why this "judgment?" Let's look at the word.

There are two different words in Scripture that are translated Judgment, or Judgment Seat. The first is the word, "criterion." It's found in James 2:6. It's also found in I Corinthians 6. Joseph Thayer, the author of the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, defines criterion this way, "the instrument or means of trying or judging anything; or the tribunal of a judge," or the bench where a judge rules. So, the word "criterion" stands for the standard by which judgment is passed or the place where judgment is meted out; the Judgment Seat, if you will.

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But, that's not the word used here. The second Greek word, and the word used here is "bema." This word, according to Thayer, stands for a raised platform where steps go up and an official sits, in order to judge a great athletic contest or something of that nature. In the Grecian games in Athens, the old arena contained a raised platform on which the president or the umpire or the judge they called him, sat and rewarded all the contestants after the games. It was called the "bema seat" if you will, the "rewards platform." So, this word bema, was never used as a judicial bench where judgment was meted out, it was only a rewards platform where contestants were given recognition for what they had done. So, Dr. Pentecost concludes in his book, Things to Come, that associated with the word, bema, are the ideas of dignity, authority, honor and reward.

So, the Bema of Christ will be held in the heavenlies, probably just after the rapture. And Christ will be seated on an awards platform—aren't you getting a little excited—an awards platform in heaven. And He is going to have every one of us pass by that throne one, by one, by one, everyone who has ever belonged to Him. And there at His feet, we will be "judged," not in the sense of condemnation, there is no condemnation, but we will be judged as in an athletic contest with an eye to what rewards, what trophies, if you will, we should receive at the hand of the Judge.

Which brings us back to what we will be judged for. According to II Corinthians 5, it's the things done in this body while we were on planet earth, whether they be "good" or "bad." Now that's another interesting Greek word that Paul uses for bad, the word, "phaulos" rather than the words normally used "kakos" or "poneras". Those words signify that which is morally or ethically evil. But he doesn't use those words here. He uses the word that describes something that has no value. It is worthless. So, when we appear before the Bema of Christ, it won't be to determine necessarily what we have done, good or bad; but what has been done in our lives that is worthless, and what has been done in our lives that has eternal value.

You see, the thought is stewardship. In I Corinthians 4, Paul reminds us:

Moreover, it is required in stewards, that one be found faithful. (I Corinthians 4:2)

Peter says in I Peter 4:

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As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another,
as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

(1 Peter 4:10)

In New Testament times, a steward was a guy who managed a large household or estate, kind of like our business manager does here at the church. He was entrusted to keep everything running smoothly. He was answerable only to the chief and to the owner and to no one else. His only concern was, that he have periodic meetings with the one who was over him, at which time he had to give an account.

Another illustration would be the one we gave earlier. You and I, commissioned as ambassadors, and sent into the very world we came out of with specific warnings and specific responsibilities. And eventually we would be called home and we would have to give an account, and our job would be reviewed.

So, let's stop for just a moment, because there is so much to cover, and let's review to date.

- 1- There will one day be a reviewing stand where we will pass before the Lord Jesus, Himself, and give an account for what we have done as ambassadors and stewards. Do you believe that? Are you with me so far? Several of you nodded; that's good.
- 2- This reviewing platform, this Bema, if you will, will be located in heaven. Got it?
- 3- The event, the passing before the Bema of Christ, will take place *after* the rapture, *before* Christ returns to earth.
- 4- What we will be accountable for as we pass by, are the things done in this body, in this life. The issue is whether any act, action or attitude was good or bad. Did it have eternal significance or was it eternally worthless?

Well, I know what you're thinking, *how is God going to determine what's good and bad, what's worthy and worthless?* I Corinthians 3, if you would like to turn there—many of you know this passage; most of you do. We'll read it together.

For we are God's fellow workers; [God's husbandry] you are God's field, you are [God's edifice] God's building [God's complex].

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a

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wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it
For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
each one's work will become clear; [tested, made manifest, revealed] for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

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; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (I Corinthians 3:9-15)

What it says is, that the Christian life can only be built on one foundation—a personal relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. There is no other foundation you can lay than that one.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

But then Paul goes on and he says, "You and I are homebuilders. We can build on that foundation, a framework for our temple of God using a variety of different materials and they fall into two categories. You all are familiar with that. Category one is wood, hay and stubble and all other materials that are what? Perishable. These incidentally, are all materials that are highly flammable, certain to be destroyed when touched by fire. The second category, gold, silver and precious stones are imperishable items, things that fire refines or polishes but doesn't destroy.

Paul is saying, everything that has ever been done in your life fits into one of two categories. The average person passing by looking at the outside of your spiritual house just cannot tell. You cannot tell often. There has to be a test; some way to determine what's eternal and what's not. So, God has designed such a test. It's called fire. When exposed to fire, that which is perishable burns; goes up in smoke, if you will. That which is imperishable stays. But, not only does it stay, the passage goes on, that which remains becomes a basis for what? Your rewards.

Now, I believe it is obvious that the fire is representative of the presence of the Shekinah Glory of God, Himself, with whom we are told is a flaming fire. When sin or works that are worthless

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and of no eternal value are exposed to that fire, the flame of His presence, they will vanish. They'll go up in smoke. And what remains will look like precious jewels—priceless rewards left behind.

What will they be? Well, we don't know for sure and we may not know for sure, but we know that the passages we will be sharing in a few moments, will remind us that, at least God has determined to define them for us, using the word, "crowns." Now, I hope you're not picturing yourself strutting around heaven with a stack of crowns. If you are, please listen a little longer.

There are two types of crowns in the New Testament. There's the "diadema" which is a kingly crown, which was worn only by royalty. That crown belongs to the person of Christ alone. But the word translated in I Corinthians 9, and II Timothy, and other places that relate to the crowns we will receive in glory at the Bema Seat of Christ, is the word, "stephanos." This is not a royal crown; this is a victor's crown. It's a wreath or a trophy given to the winner of a pageant or a contest, to one who has run the race and won. It doesn't denote royalty; it denotes a tribute bestowed for a victory won. And that's what we will receive.

Now, who is going to determine what is gold, silver and precious stones, and wood, hay and stubble. I wish we had more time on this, but the simplest way probably to define what is indestructible in the presence of God is to realize that only what God, Himself, is capable of creating is eternal. Therefore, only what we have allowed God to do will last. Everything we have done is perishable. Only God's work will stand the test of God's presence. So, what we have done in our own strength, no matter how religious or charitable, or churchy, will perish. Whatever was done for the flesh or in the flesh, or for the glory of the flesh, cannot remain in the presence of God. And certainly, all we have thought or done that's in conflict with the Word of God will burn.

The passage concludes—and I trust you understand, that there are some whose lives have produced nothing eternal. That's what Paul said, but they will still be saved. The illustration, however, is one of a guy sitting outside the charred wreckage of his house that's just burned down. Everything is gone. He has nothing to show for it all. He's safe; he's been saved, but as one who is snatched out of a fire, and he has nothing to show for his life.

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Paul is saying, “Here’s a man who has been saved from the fire himself. The presence of God cannot consume him, because the blood of Christ has insulated him, and he, himself, will be spared from the flames of eternal punishment.” But, like that ambassador who was called home, there will be nothing to show.

Ah, but for those whose lives have allowed God to produce through them, godliness, crowns will be theirs. Well, what are we going to do with them? Strut around heaven boasting of our laurel wreaths; wearing our crowns like merit badges to display our righteousness? God forbid! No, any time we take God’s glory and steal it for ourselves, we lose it, don’t we? So, the purpose of the crowns can’t be for us to glory in. Beloved, the crowns are to give us the more with which to worship Him.

I think the best demonstration of how crowns will be used in heaven is found in Revelation 4:10. You don’t need to turn there, but if you read it sometime, you will remember that there’s a pattern there of the elders seen gathered around the throne casting their crowns before the throne as an act of worship. Now listen, the greater the degree of our rewards, the greater our capacity to bring glory to God by worshipping His Son. Think about it. Christ *in* us did the good works. Christ *for* us bestows *on* us crowns, rewards, for what He had done. And Christ *before* us, then receives the crowns as we, in ever-increasing splendor, have the more with which to worship Him.

So, the more you let Christ do *through* you on planet earth, the greater will be your ability to worship Him in eternity. As one author put it so well, “Capacities to radiate glory will differ, but there will be no personal sense of lack in any believer because each of us will be filled with the limit of our capacity to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His light.” (1 Peter 2:9). Glory it will be! But, the more we have allowed Him to do through us, the more He will bless us, giving us the more with which to glorify Him throughout eternity. Don’t you get excited? And don’t you understand, that for the rest of your breathing, living moments on planet earth, every second ought to be devoted to letting the Spirit of God pour through you and allowing Him to control your life, so that what is produced are eternal rewards, that you will have the more with which to worship Him.

Well, what are some of the things for which crowns will be given. We don’t have time, but to mention them. We’ll go over the

ones the Scriptures mention. It would be a good study for you to do on your own.

1- In I Corinthians 9, we read about the Incorruptible Crown. This is a crown or a reward given to those who have kept their bodies in subjection. They have run the race and mastered those besetting sins that so easily corrupt us. I think it's for Christians who have learned to live a holy life.

2- In I Thessalonians 2:19, we read about a Crown of Rejoicing given to Christians as a result of lives, their lives have touched. Paul said:

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?
(I Thessalonians 2:19)

People—people your life has been used to touch.

3- In James 1:12, we're told about the Crown of Life given to those who faithfully endure.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, 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)

4- II Timothy 4, talks about the Crown of Righteousness given to those who anxiously look forward to Christ's appearing (II Timothy 4:8).

5- In I Peter 5, we read about the Crown of Glory for those who feed the flock of God faithfully with the Word (I Peter 5:4).

So, the Scripture clearly indicates that how we allow Christ in us to control the sin nature, to lead others to Christ and build them up, to endure hardship, to anticipate His return and to preach and teach His Word, will affect the rewards we receive. Other passages talk about how we treat others, how we exercise authority, how we use our spiritual gifts, how we use our money and our time, and how we run the race assigned to us.

It's been a tough message, I know, because time is short and there is so much to communicate and it's so awesome to think about. But let's just stop in closing, and summarize. One day, very soon perhaps, immediately after we have been swept up into heaven to be with Christ, something extraordinary will take place. Scripture calls it, the Bema of Christ. You and I and every born-again child of God who has ever lived, will pass before a

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reviewing stand, an awards platform somewhere in heaven. The Judge, or the Rewarder will be the Lord Jesus, Himself.

We will have returned from our tour as ambassadors. And God won't be interested in how many houses we've built, how many new cars we've owned, how many dollars we've made, how many speeches we've given, or even how churchy we've been. God isn't even going to be interested in how important we were in the world in which we lived. You see, we weren't sent to become entangled in the world in which we live. We were sent to be ambassadors. So, what God is going to be interested in, is how faithfully we have allowed the King to build the Kingdom through us.

One by one, we will pass in front of Him. The very contents of our lives will be revealed. In a moment, everything done to the glory of man will suddenly burst into flames and be gone. For some, nothing will remain but their salvation. They will have invested everything in the wrong kingdom and they'll have to leave everything behind they gave their lives for. What a waste.

But for others, the flames, once they have devoured those things not done in the Spirit, will see remain an incredible residue of beautiful jewels; golden laurel wreaths of victory suddenly appearing from out of nowhere. And then we'll hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," and we'll begin to realize, He did the good works; we get the rewards.

In awesome adoration, we will fall at His feet and cast those crowns at the very feet of the One who made them possible. We will have the more with which to worship Him. And surrounded by His glory, we will magnify that glory by glorifying Him. What a day! What a Savior! What an expectation!

There's still a lot we don't know about this incredible experience known as the rewards platform in heaven, but we know enough to convince us there is no need to live anymore as though heaven held no accountability. Heaven will be glorious for every one who is there. But heaven will have more glory for those who have more glory to give to the King.

No matter how you have lived your life, beloved, up until now, may I ask you, this morning, to reconsider the fact that you have been commissioned by the King as an ambassador. And He sent you back to the very world He called you out of and He quietly has reminded you, dear ambassador, remember:

Welcome Home, Mister Ambassador

- Don't become entangled in the affairs of this world.
- Remember, you are an ambassador, not a citizen.
- The world is looking at you to learn of Him.
- Don't make your investments here. This is going to pass away.
- At any moment, the King may call you home. There won't be time to rearrange your priorities. You will leave everything behind.
- When you arrive home, you will be called upon to give an account to the Commander in Chief.
- You will be rewarded according to what He has done.

He will either say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Welcome home, Mr. Ambassador." Or, His eyes will meet yours in silent love, grateful that you are there, but disappointed you have given your life to a kingdom that was passing away.

Now, I don't know about you, but I can tell you what God has been saying to me through this study, and that He is lovingly but convincingly saying, "Give your life to things eternal." One day very soon, you will be in the presence of Christ, Himself. You will stand, Mr. Ambassador, at the Bema Seat of the King. And if you can close your eyes and envision it, the experience will go something like this, and with this we close.

WELCOME HOME, MR. AMBASSADOR

The festival's beginning
The hour is at hand
And a hush that stills a whisper
Has settled on the land.

It's time for the rewards
And the crowd has gathered near
The Master is approaching
But there's not a sign of fear.

For it's not a time of judgment
The judgment time is passed
And the Master has come this time
To reveal what works will last.

Welcome Home, Mister Ambassador

Lo, He comes, what blinding glory
The glow of His attire
Seems to light up all of heaven
Like a blazing, searing fire.

What's happening, we wonder,
for as He passes through
We can feel a holy power
And our lives are passed in view.

And the glory of His presence
Like a flaming fire turned loose
Now consumes those things in our lives
That He did not produce.

And as He passes by us, lo
We see the ashes gone
And the things that still remain
Are things that He, Himself has done.

Oh, the glory of those things He did
They shine like jewels so rare
They sparkle in His presence
And they tell us He is there.

Like crowns of righteous royalty
They glisten in the light
Until the only thing reflected
Is the Master's face in sight.

Overwhelmed by all His love
We approach the Bema Seat
And without a word we cast those jewels
In worship at His feet.

Oh, what joy, none can describe it
As we worship Him in song
And we sing "Hosanna, praise Him"
At His feet where we belong.

Those who let Him rule and reign in life
Find heaven now complete
For the things He did, have now become
Rare jewels at His feet.

Welcome Home, Mister Ambassador

And we can but kneel before Him
For his loving eyes to see
The rewards He gives belong to Him
For all eternity.

His is the glory, beloved
It was He who paid the price
Thus, to Him belongs the glory
At the Bema Seat of Christ.

Let's pray.

Our gracious God, loving Father, thank You for the photograph in Scripture of that day that is yet to come. May we leave this place renewed in our hearts, that Yours is the Kingdom and Yours is the Glory. And may we relinquish control of our lives that You might have control and thus develop, even through us, rewards that one day we can use the more with which to worship You.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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