

# Reward and Punishment to Be Bestowed in the Next World

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Reward and Punishment to Be Bestowed in This World (Prov. 11:31).

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How is someone, who is regarded as righteous, rewarded? This is an important question because the correct answer will explain why there is no contradiction between Proverbs 11:31 and the scriptures in Matthew 16:27, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and Revelation 20:12. For example, if the reward of the righteous is measured by physical blessings (including long life, success in one's job, wealth, favor within their families and communities, etc.) then there is a problem because, more often than not, God's servants have been ridiculed, defamed, marginalized, and physically attacked. Therefore, their primary reward cannot consist of physical possessions in this world,

Many are the afflictions of the righteous... (Ps. 34:19a; cf. 119:71; Jas. 1:2; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

**...If they (the unrighteous) persecuted me (Christ), they will also persecute you (the righteous).** If they kept my word, they will keep yours also (Jn. 15:20b; cf. Lk. 11:47-51; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Even to the present hour we (Christ's apostles) both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless (1Cor. 4:11; Ed. note in parenthesis).

From the Jews five times I (Paul) received forty stripes minus one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep (Mediterranean Sea); <sup>26</sup>in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen (the Jews), in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings (without food and water) often, in cold and nakedness (2Cor. 11:24-27; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Therefore the reward of the righteous must be of a spiritual nature. According to many scriptures the righteous are waiting patiently for this reward, but it will not come until Christ returns to establish his Father's kingdom on earth (cf. Isa. 40:10; 62:11). Between now and then, God's servants will continue to be mistreated and abused at the hands of the wicked,

When he (Christ) opened the fifth seal, I (John) saw (in a vision) under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. <sup>10</sup>And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood

on those who dwell on the earth?' <sup>11</sup>And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed (Rev. 6:9-11; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So the ultimate reward of the righteous will come when true justice is served on earth, but this will not occur until after Christ's return,

The righteous shall (future tense) rejoice when he sees the vengeance (of Almighty God); he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked (cf. Rom. 16:20), <sup>11</sup>So that men will say, '**Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges in the earth**' (Ps. 58:10-11; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The righteous know that their reward is registered in heaven (cf. Rev. 20:15), and they do not seek it in the pleasures and pursuits of this short physical existence,

Blessed are you when they (the unrighteous) revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my (Christ's) sake. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for **great is your reward in heaven** (cf. Rev. 20:15), for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Mt. 5:11-12; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup>choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup>esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for **he looked to the reward** (which he knew was not in this physical life) (Heb. 11:24-26; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Moses and all the patriarchs who served Almighty God during the First Covenant period knew that their ultimate reward would come when the promised Messiah came to establish God's kingdom on earth, and they were resurrected to everlasting life,

For the Son of Man will come in the glory (power) of his Father with his angels, and **then he** (Christ) **will reward each according to his works** (Mt. 16:27; cf. Col. 3:23-25; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

When Christ returns, the righteous will be resurrected, and everyone who has ever existed will be judged. This judgment will be progressive starting at Christ's return and continuing until the conclusion of the second resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6),

The nations were angry (just prior to Christ's return), and Your (God's) wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that **You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints**, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth (Satan and the fallen host; Isa. 14:16-20 cf. Eph. 6:12) (Rev. 11:18; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

And behold, I (Christ) am coming quickly, and **my reward is with me**, to give to everyone according to his work (Rev. 22:12; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

With this background, the scripture that apparently contradicts Matthew 16:27, 2Corinthians 5:10 and Revelation 20:12 will be examined,

If the righteous will be recompensed (rewarded) on the earth (at the first resurrection), how much more the wicked and the sinner (Prov. 11:31; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Scripture states plainly that the righteous will inherit the earth and this is a reference to the first resurrection when they receive their reward, and not during their physical lifetimes,

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5; cf. Ps. 37:11).

For evildoers shall (eventually) be cut off (destroyed); but those who wait on the Lord, they shall (at a future resurrection) inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9; cf. 37:22; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Although God's righteous servants have very little power or influence during their lifetime, the tables will be turned when they are resurrected. Because they proved trustworthy when they were composed of "flesh and blood," they will be given authority to serve under Jesus Christ for eternity after their resurrection from the dead,

So Jesus said to them (his disciples), 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration (resurrection from the dead), when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, **you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel** (Mt. 19:28; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

So claiming Proverbs 11:31 is proof that reward and punishment is to be bestowed during this physical life is not correct, especially in the ultimate sense of reward and judgment. Besides, there are many scriptures showing that the wicked are not always punished during their physical lifetime. This is because God extends His patience, mercy, and love in the hope that the wicked will repent (cf. 2Pet. 3:9). Therefore, He allows the righteous and unrighteous to receive many physical benefits and when someone is harmed it is often due to cause and effect. In other words, breaking God's law and commandments has negative consequences for both the sinner as well as those that may be affected by the actions of the sinner,

That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for **He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and unjust** (Mt. 5:45; emphasis added).

Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and **receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which is due** (Rom. 1:27; emphasis added).

He who sows iniquity (sin; 1Jn. 3:4) will reap sorrow (trouble)...(Prov. 22:8a; cf. Job 4:8; Hos. 10:13; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Although the wicked are not always punished during this physical life, their time of judgment will come at the second resurrection from the dead,

The tents of robbers prosper, and those who provoke God are secure in what God provides by His hand (Job 12:6).

Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches (Ps. 73:12).

...Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?

(Jer. 12:1b).

In conclusion, a final reward and punishment will come from God, beginning at Christ's return and continuing until after the second resurrection. However, cause and effect still occurs when people break God's laws and receive the consequences during this lifetime. However, to make a blanket statement that reward and punishment occurs now, based on an erroneous interpretation of Proverbs 11:31, is misguided and misleading. Therefore, there is no contradiction between Proverbs 11:31 and the other three scriptures mentioned in the heading of this study.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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