

Briefing Document: The Judgment of Believers' Works & When Do We Leave?

Lesson 4 – August 24, 2025

This document summarizes key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts, focusing on the concepts of the judgment of believers' works and the timing of the rapture.

I. The Judgment of Believers' Works

The excerpts describe a future event where the works of all believers will be tested to determine their rewards, not their salvation. This judgment is based on three primary criteria: motives, conduct, and utilization of spiritual gifts.

A. Criteria for Rewards (Ministry)

- Motives – The underlying reasons for actions.
- Conduct – The righteousness and holiness of daily life.
- Utilization of Spiritual Gifts – Using one's God-given abilities for His purposes.

These three aspects collectively define a believer's "ministry."

B. The Testing Process (Fire Analogy)

- "There will be a day when their work is going to be tested."
- This testing is likened to building a house on a foundation, then having it burned. Everything worthless is consumed, while gold, silver, and precious stones remain.
- The remaining "good works" form the basis of rewards.
- "If you don't build upon your foundation with good materials, is the Lord going to punish you? No—we're not talking about punishment. We're talking about rewards here."
- "Then each one's praise will come from God." (1 Corinthians 4:5 NKJV)
- The testing of works is explicitly not related to damnation but to the quality and enduring nature of one's service. Paul uses the imagery of fire to show that some works are worthless (combustible), while others are enduring (built upon the foundation of Christ).

C. Types of Builders and Their Outcomes

1. Constructive Work (Gold, Silver, Precious Stones)

- Characterized by sound doctrine, right motives, proper conduct, and effective service.
- Examples include teaching biblical truth, obeying sound doctrine, being motivated by unselfish love for the glory of God, and living a holy and righteous life.
- These works endure the fire, and the builder "will receive a reward."
- The foundation is explicitly salvation in Jesus Christ: "Your foundation is your salvation. You have no foundation if you are not saved—and that foundation is Jesus."

2. Worthless Work (Wood, Hay, Stubble)

- "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." (1 Corinthians 3:15 NKJV)

- The loss is specifically “the loss of his rewards,” not salvation.
- This happens when Christians do what they want instead of what God desires.
- Believers are encouraged to discover their spiritual gift and serve within it.
- Example: John MacArthur recognized preaching as his primary gift. God provided a helper to facilitate his writing so he could focus on preaching.
- The Greek word translated as “bad” in 2 Corinthians 5:10 is clarified as phaulos (worthless)[1], emphasizing judgment on “what is good and what is worthless,” not “what is evil.”

3. Destructive Work (Unbelievers/Defilers)

- This refers to those who destroy what God is endeavoring to build.
- The church, both individually (“you are the temple of God”) and collectively, is considered God’s holy temple.
- “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” (1 Corinthians 3:17 NKJV)
- God is deeply jealous over the purity of His church and will not look kindly upon those who seek to defile or destroy it.

D. Rewards (Crowns)

- Rewards are often referred to as “crowns” in Scripture.
- Revelation 4:4–10 describes 24 elders (believed to represent the church) wearing victor’s crowns (stephanos[2], not diadēma[3]). They cast them before the throne of God in worship, acknowledging His worthiness. This symbolizes showing the Lord love and service in the right way.

Quick Reference Table: Crowns in Scripture

| Crown | Greek Term | Scripture Reference | Description |
|------------------------|------------|----------------------|---|
| Incorruptible Crown | Stephanos | 1 Corinthians 9:25 | For the faithful, obedient, and self-disciplined in their Christian walk. |
| Crown of Righteousness | Stephanos | 2 Timothy 4:8 | For those who remain faithful until the appearing of Jesus Christ. |
| Crown of Rejoicing | Stephanos | 1 Thessalonians 2:19 | For those who win souls and rejoice in those they have led to Christ. |
| Crown of Glory | Stephanos | 1 Peter 5:4 | For faithful pastors who shepherd God’s flock well. |

Crown of Life

Stephanos

James 1:12;
Revelation 2:10

For those who
endure trials
faithfully and love
Christ sacrificially.

II. When Do We Leave? (The Rapture)

The second theme discusses the timing of the rapture, or the “catching away” of the church, in relation to the Tribulation.

A. The Promise of the Rapture

- “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 NKJV)
- The church will be caught away. Scripture is clear: Jesus will come for His church.

B. The Tribulation

- A seven-year period marked by:
 - Wars and nations rising against nations.
 - Israel’s return and redemption.
 - Earthquakes, pestilence, famine, unbelief.
 - The growth of an apostate church.
 - The rise of a one-world government.
 - The Antichrist and the false prophet.
 - Fiery judgments killing over half the world’s population.
- “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matthew 24:21 NKJV)

C. Debates on Rapture Timing

- The central question: Does the church go through the Tribulation?
- Three main views:
 - Pre-Tribulation – Jesus comes before the Tribulation.
 - Mid-Tribulation – Jesus comes midway through.
 - Post-Tribulation – Jesus comes after.
- The speaker leans toward a Pre-Tribulation view: “I know what I know—I think I know.”
- The practical issue: Should Christians prepare physically (stockpile supplies), or simply be ready spiritually for Jesus?
- The goal: Educate believers to understand what they believe and why. This is not a matter of salvation.

D. The World's Reaction to the Rapture

- The world will likely try to deny the rapture, preparing excuses such as zombies or aliens.
- Despite denial, it will be obvious that millions are gone, causing chaos: planes falling, cars crashing, and widespread disorder.
- Satan will begin his greatest work after the rapture, deceiving those left behind.

Greek Words in This Briefing

1. φαῦλος (phaulos) – FAH-oo-los
 - Meaning: Worthless, of no account, trivial.
 - Used in 2 Corinthians 5:10, contrasting what is good versus what is worthless.
2. στέφανος (stephanos) – STEF-ah-nos
 - Meaning: A victor's crown, given as a reward for achievement.
 - Used of the crowns believers receive as rewards.
3. διάδημα (diadēma) – dee-AH-deh-mah
 - Meaning: A royal crown, symbol of kingly authority.
 - Used in Revelation for crowns of rulers, not for the rewards of believers.