

Lesson 39: Justification, Sanctification, Glorification (II)

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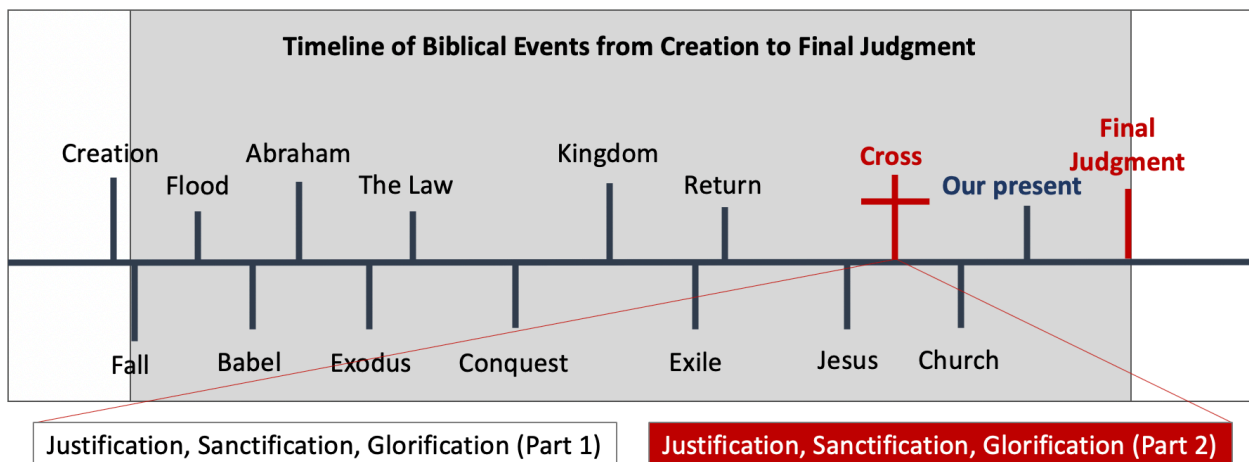
We learnt two important meanings of the words “saved” and “salvation”.

1. **Justification:** Yahweh saves us from the penalty of sin when we put our faith in Jesus.
2. **Sanctification:** Yahweh saves us from the power of sin as the Holy Spirit works in us to push out our sin and build our trust and obedience to Yahweh.



The third meaning of “saved” is glorification.

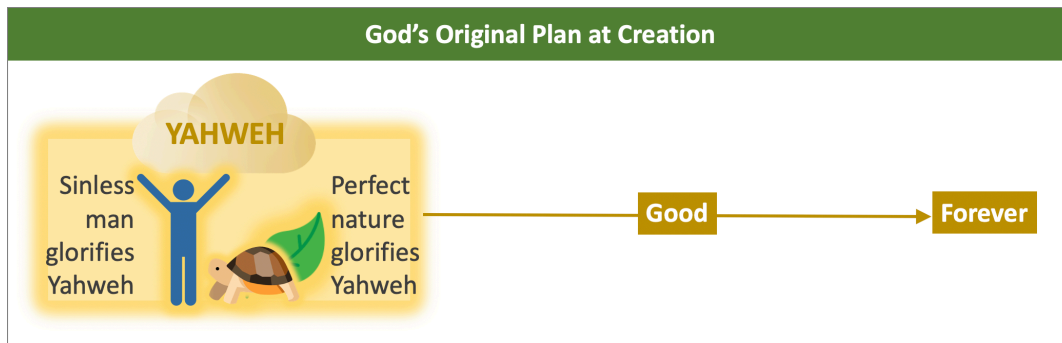
Yahweh also promises to save us from the presence of sin.



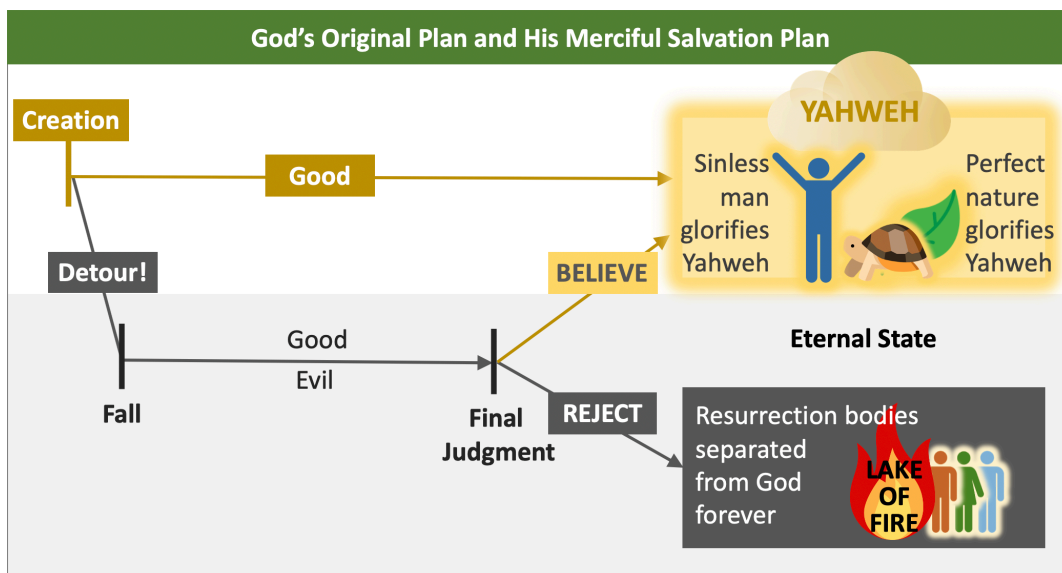


3. Saved from the Presence of Sin: Glorification

Yahweh's original plan was for mankind and nature to enjoy and reflect His glory.



However, sin at the Fall made mankind blind to God's amazing glory. Nature also became corrupted. Man took a huge "detour" away from God's original plan.



But God's plans are never thwarted. He intends to restore His original purpose. So, in His grace, Yahweh put in place a complete salvation plan which will end with Him:

- getting rid of all sin and evil from mankind, nature and the world forever and
- allowing righteous man and perfect nature to glorify and reflect His glory.

We must not be mistaken and think that salvation alone is God's ultimate purpose. No. God's plan for salvation is His merciful response to rebellious fallen man. Salvation is necessary to fulfil His original plan. This is where "glorification" comes in.

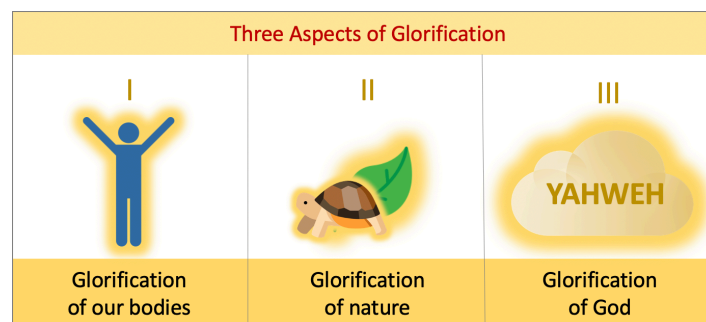
a. What is Glorification?

Simply put, glorification is God saving believers from the presence of sin in the eternal state: mankind will never again live with sin inside or outside of themselves!

Instead, in this eternal state, both mankind and nature will:

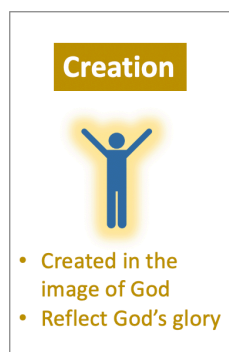
- see God's glory clearly
- glorify God fully and
- enjoy and reflect His glory!

We will look at three important aspects of glorification.



I. Glorification of Our Bodies

At Creation, God made man in His own image. People were created to be able to gaze upon God's perfect righteousness without embarrassment, shame, or jealousy just as Adam and Eve had done. They spoke comfortably with God while totally naked. In addition, people were to display their unique design to the rest of creation. Creation would see and then deeply appreciate God's special handiwork in creating mankind.

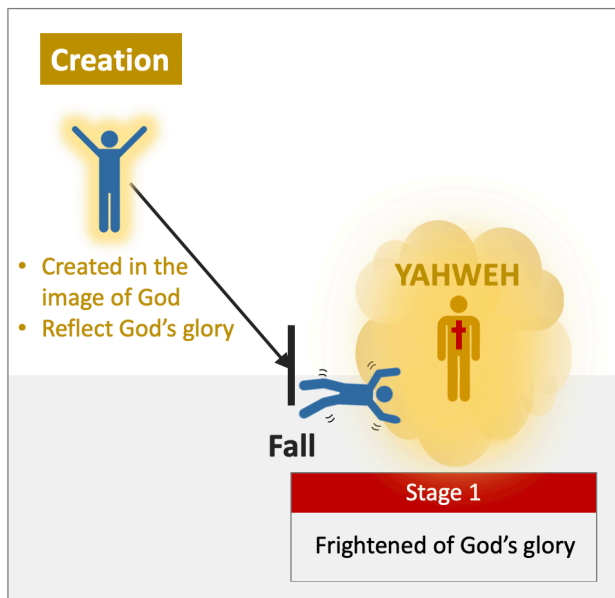


But because of the Fall, man cannot bear to see His glory. God's perfect glory became a threat to fallen mankind. Just as Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, we too, turn away from Him. And in our fallen state, we are a damaged image. We no longer display a clear picture of God's special handiwork to the rest of creation.

However, Yahweh intends to help believers regain the ability to see and reflect His glory. How will He do this? There are three stages.

Stage 1: Believers are initially unable to experience God’s glory properly.

Even after we first become believers, because of our sin nature, we cannot appreciate God’s glory. In fact, Ezekiel fell face down on the ground when he saw God’s glory!



Ezekiel 1:28

All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the LORD looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell face down on the ground, and I heard someone’s voice speaking to me.



God’s glory also made Isaiah feel devastated because he felt his sin nature all the more.

Isaiah 6:1–5

¹ It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the LORD. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. ² Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ They were calling out to each other,

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory!”

⁴ Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.”



In fact, in the New Testament, Peter had the same response of falling to his knees and realising his own sinfulness when he saw Christ.

Luke 5:8

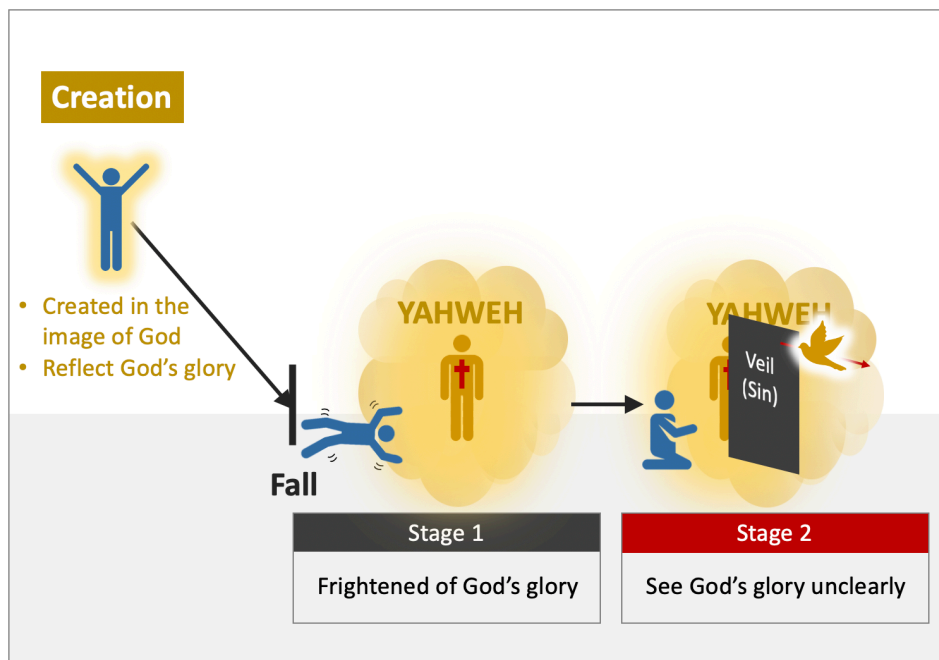
When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.”



Stage 2: As the Holy Spirit works in believers, we begin to see God’s glory.

As believers who are justified, the Holy Spirit works to sanctify us. Our sin nature was like a veil that made it hard for us to see God’s glory. But the Holy Spirit pulls away the veil and two things happen:

- We are able to face God’s glory with less embarrassment and shame. When God made clothes for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness, they must have felt some relief as He made it possible for them to face Him with less of a sense of shame. Likewise, as the Holy Spirit works in us, we are able to face Him with a lesser sense of embarrassment.
- As the Holy Spirit grows our obedience and loyalty to God, His glory begins to be revealed through us. Our everyday lives, actions and words begin to reflect God’s glory!



2 Corinthians 3:16–18

¹⁶ But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

At Sinai, God's glory was displayed on the mountain and when Moses came down, his face reflected God's glory. But that soon faded away because an external law cannot change people's hearts and help us see and reflect God's glory.



Mosaic Law led to death:
an external law cannot change hearts

But after Jesus' work on the Cross, the Holy Spirit works deep in our hearts, changing us from the inside out, so we can experience Yahweh's glory!



Holy Spirit gives life:
He changes hearts and
helps us see God's glory

2 Corinthians 3:7–11

⁷ The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away.

⁸ Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? ⁹ If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God!

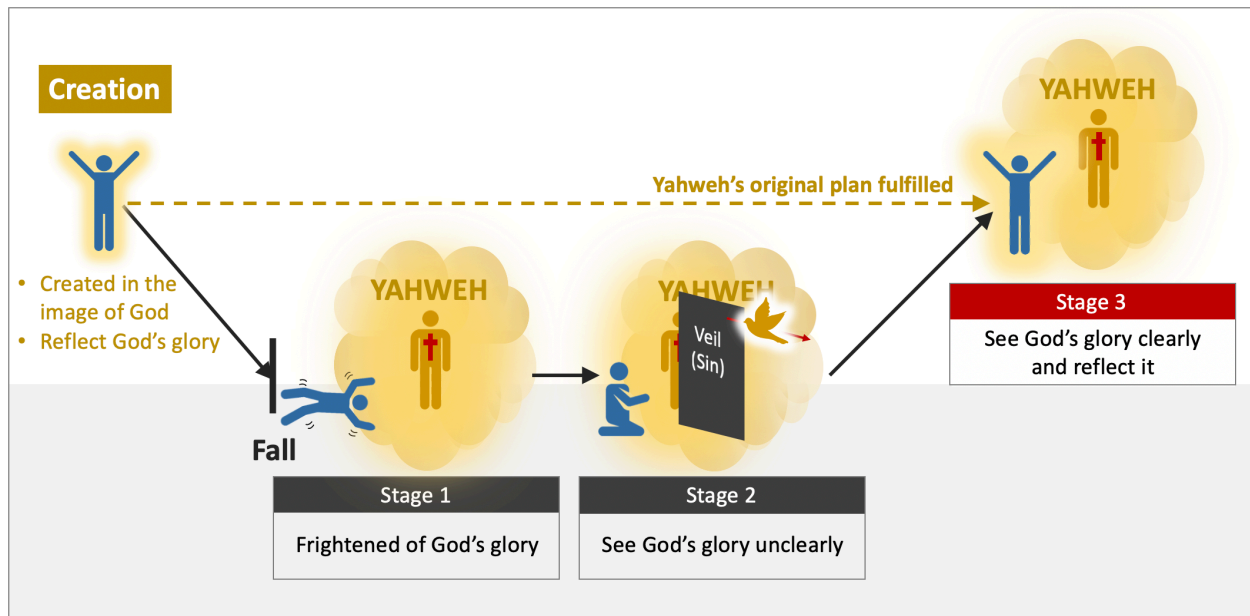
¹⁰ In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. ¹¹ So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

Stage 3: When God gives us our resurrection bodies, we will see His glory clearly.

At Yahweh's timing, He will replace believers' earthly, perishable bodies with imperishable ones from heaven. Our new immortal bodies will be just like Jesus' resurrection body.

Philippians 3:20–21

²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. ²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.



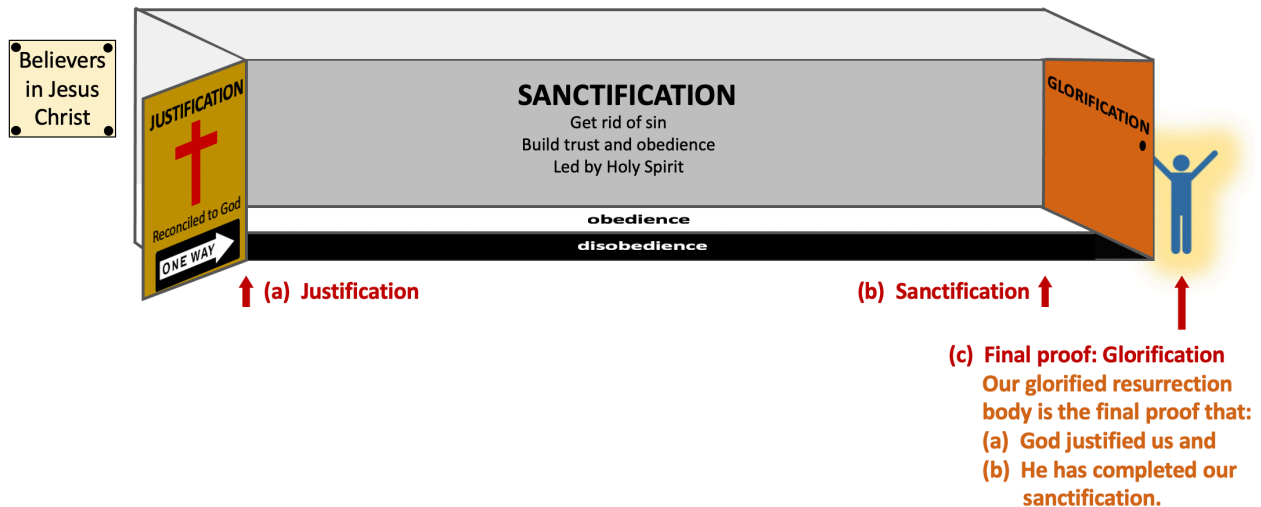
The resurrection of believers is a huge event that brings God great glory. It is visible proof that Yahweh keeps His covenant promises to mankind. At that moment, everyone will thank and praise God and glorify His name!

2 Corinthians 4:14–15

¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. ¹⁵ All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

In fact, our glorified resurrection bodies is the final proof that God:

- justified us when we put our faith in Him (meaning He declared and sees us as righteous on the “outside”) and also
- completed our sanctification for us, making us fully righteous on the inside as well.



It is the final proof that we are indeed His children!

Romans 8:18–19, 23b–25

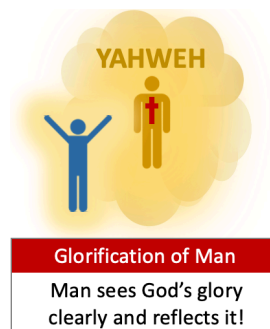
¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²³ We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

And with our resurrection bodies:

- We can be in God's presence, look without restriction at His full glory, and **worship** Him properly.
- We, as perfect images of God, can also finally **reflect** Him properly as He originally designed us to do! In that sense, we share in God's glory. This is how God will glorify believing mankind!



Romans 5:2

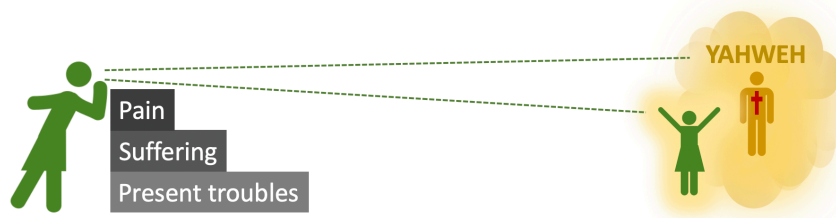
Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

Man shares God’s glory! Man is glorified!

All this information should be great encouragement for us. We are quickly approaching the time when we will be glorified!

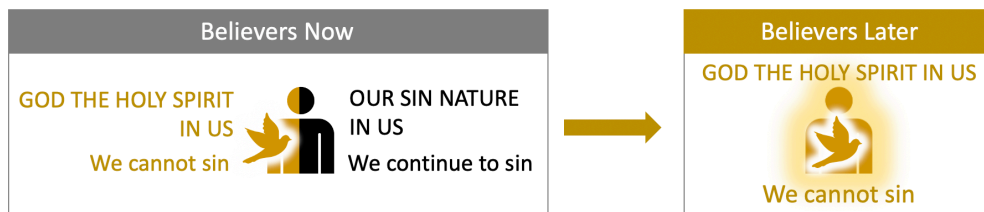
2 Corinthians 4:16–18

¹⁶ That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. ¹⁷ For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! ¹⁸ So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

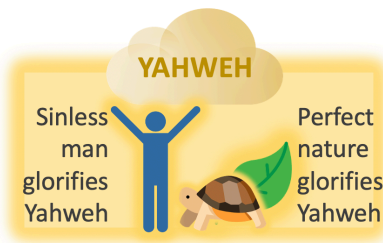


Some believers feel uncomfortable to hear that people will be glorified. We feel this way now because we are still sinful.

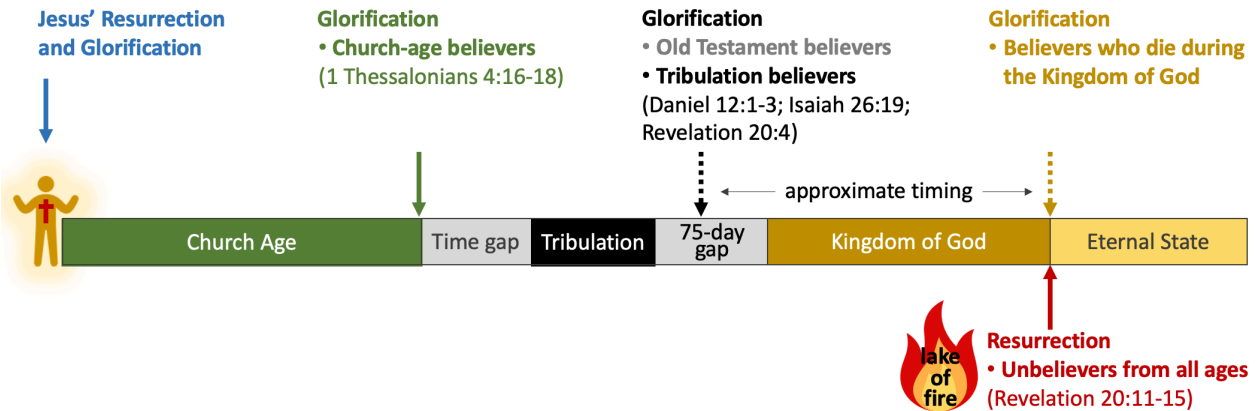
But when God completely wipes out the sin nature in us, we will be made new and we will be perfect images of God, reflecting His glory correctly. When another person looks at us, they will see God’s glory reflected in us.



We will be living, breathing, perfect but finite copies of Yahweh’s glory. That is how God originally created mankind and He will bring all believers to that state!



When will we get our glorified bodies?



At some point in the future, all church-age believers, both Jews and Gentiles, will get resurrection bodies at the same moment. This includes all believers who have died since the start of the church age and those who will be alive at this future point in time. This event will be at the end of the church age and is often called the “rapture”, which means “carrying off” in Latin. This word doesn’t appear in Scripture but the Bible teaches that the rapture is when Jesus will carry off church-age believers from the earth before God starts His fierce judgment on unbelieving Israel and the unbelieving world.

- **Believers who are still alive** at that time will be “raptured” and get their glorified bodies.
- **Church-age believers who have died** will also receive their glorified bodies at this same time.

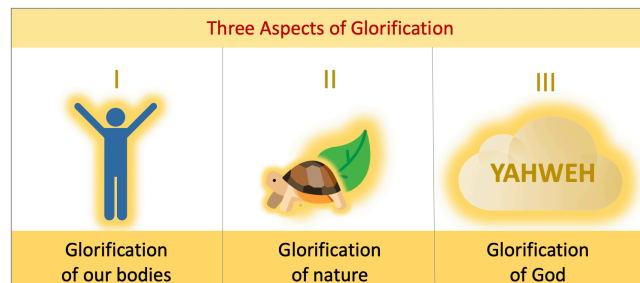
1 Corinthians 15:51–53

⁵¹ But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! ⁵² It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. ⁵³ For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Believers not from this church age will get their glorified bodies at a later time. We will study this further in a later lesson.

However, glorification of our bodies is only one aspect of being “saved”.

“Salvation” in the sense of glorification also involves nature.





II. Glorification of nature

It was God’s plan all along that nature would reflect His glory. Nature is not an unimportant byproduct of creation.

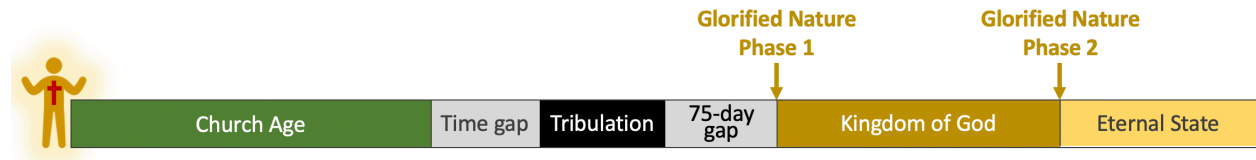
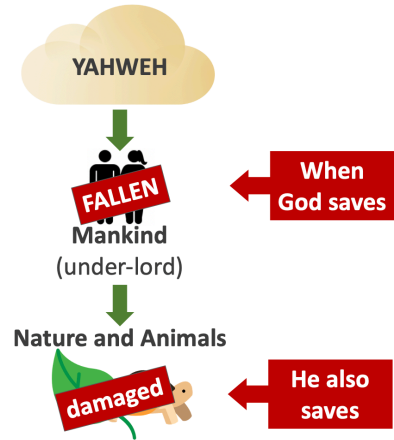
Fallen mankind was responsible for nature being cursed, but God intends to restore and glorify nature once again.

Romans 8:20–22

²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

God will remove all the effects of sin and evil from the earth and restore the perfect conditions of Eden.

How and when will this happen? It will happen in two phases.



Phase 1

The first phase of the renewal of nature is during the physical return of the Kingdom of God to earth.

During that period, known as the Millennium (because it lasts a thousand years [Revelation 20:4]), nature will be changed to conditions very much like the time before the Fall. God’s glory will once again be displayed through the beauty of nature.

Isaiah 55:12–13

¹² You will live in joy and peace.
 The mountains and hills will burst into song,
 and the trees of the field will clap their hands!
¹³ Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow.
 Where nettles grew, myrtles will sprout up.
These events will bring great honor to the LORD’s name;
 they will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.”



Phase 2

After the Millennium, God will totally destroy this current heavens and earth. He will change the earth like how we would change from old to new clothes.

Psalm 102:25–26

²⁵ Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth
and made the heavens with your hands.

²⁶ They will perish, but you remain forever;
they will wear out like old clothing.

You will change them like a garment
and discard them.

It is almost as if God resurrects the universe! It will be completely recreated. We will barely recognise it because it will be even better than at the original creation!

Revelation 21:1–3

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.



When Yahweh brings in the new heaven and earth, the universe will reflect His glory fully.

As mankind finally exercises, or practises good responsible dominion over the earth, we will see God’s glory reflected everywhere: in nature, in the animals, in the food we grow, and in the places we will live in and visit for enjoyment. God’s glory will be very visible everywhere!

III. Glorification of God

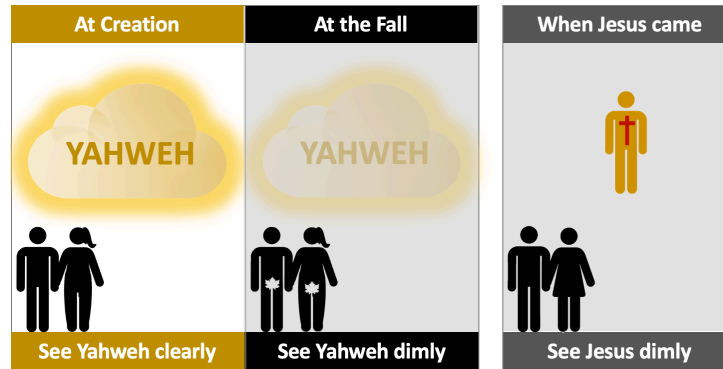
When Adam and Eve were innocent, they could see Yahweh’s glory clearly. But not after the Fall.

Later on, man could see a little of God’s glory again through Jesus. However, Jesus’ glory was not at its fullest. He kept it hidden most of the time while on earth. He did not use any of His “God-powers” unless the Father told Him to.

Philippians 2:6–7a

⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.



When the time came for Jesus to be crucified, He asked God the Father to let His full glory be shown after He finished His work on the cross.

John 17:1–5

¹ After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you.

² For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³ And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

⁴ I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

After His resurrection, Jesus went up to heaven to be with God the Father. There, Jesus’ full glory is revealed.



When we get our glorified bodies, we will finally be able to see God as He really is, in His full glory, splendour and holiness!

1 John 3:2

Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.

Titus 2:11–13

¹¹ For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. ¹² And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, ¹³ while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.

**We will be able to glorify God better than Adam and Eve ever could!**

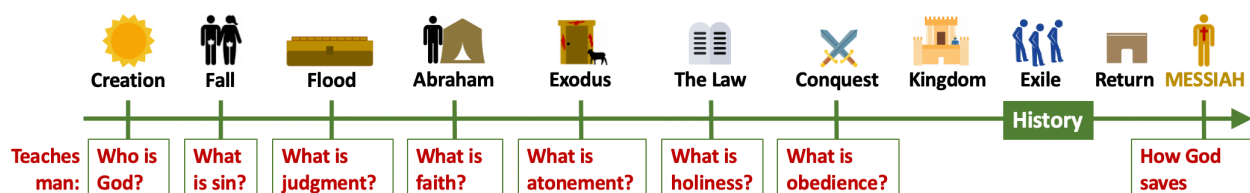
When we have our resurrection bodies, we will be able to glorify God better than people in the past. Why? Because we will have seen what God had done in all of history and we will understand more about His great love, grace, mercy and worthiness to be worshipped! In the Bible, the first record of man worshipping God is in Genesis 4.

Genesis 4:26

When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

Why did worship of God only start in Genesis 4? Why not when man was first created?

- In the early days of mankind, people were just starting to learn about the Creator-God. When they understood only a little about Him, they appreciated Him very little. People had to spend time with Him and see Him in action before recognising that He is a God worth worshipping.
- As Yahweh steadily built up His history and track record with mankind, people everywhere could see His character as He sovereignly directed history. The more people learnt about God, the more they could worship Him.



At the end, after thousands of years of history and after God completes His salvation plan, mankind will know so much more about God than the early people ever did.

So, at the end of human history, glorified people are able to worship God in a way not possible for Adam and Eve at the beginning of human history! Listen to the song that the apostle John heard: this is what we will all sing in the future!

Revelation 5:11–13

¹¹ Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. ¹² And they sang in a mighty chorus:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered—
to receive power and riches
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing.”

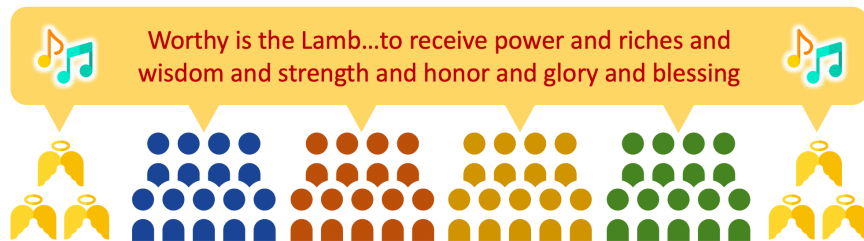
¹³ And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
belong to the one sitting on the throne
and to the Lamb forever and ever.”



There will be real solid content to our worship! We will sing of God’s history and track record!

All believers will sing with conviction and deep emotion because all will have experienced God’s love, mercy, the gift of His salvation, and the gift of our immortal bodies!



As we see Yahweh with our glorified eyes, we will worship Him like never before. His glory, which was always with Him, will finally be laser sharp and clear to us!

The time of glorification of our bodies, nature and God Himself is a wonderful exciting time to look forward to!

Knowing this is coming should help us endure this life while we are being sanctified.

Three Aspects of Glorification		
I 	II 	III
Glorification of our bodies	Glorification of nature	Glorification of God

b. Examples of “saved” from the presence of sin (glorified) in the Bible

Often, when the passage is written to believers and the topic is about the future, it is referring to the final state of our salvation: the glorification of believers.

Example 1: Peter

Peter started his letter to believers by reminding them of the glorification that is awaiting all believers.

1 Peter 1:3–5

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. ⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

Verse 5 says:

And through **your faith**,

Peter is talking to those who are already justified: they are believers.

God is protecting you by his power **until you receive this salvation**,

The correct understanding is “until you receive this glorification”.

which is ready to be **revealed on the last day for all to see**.

Our glorified resurrection bodies will be revealed so people can finally clearly see who we really are—believers!

Peter is not saying that we have not yet received our **justification**.

Neither is he talking about **sanctification**.

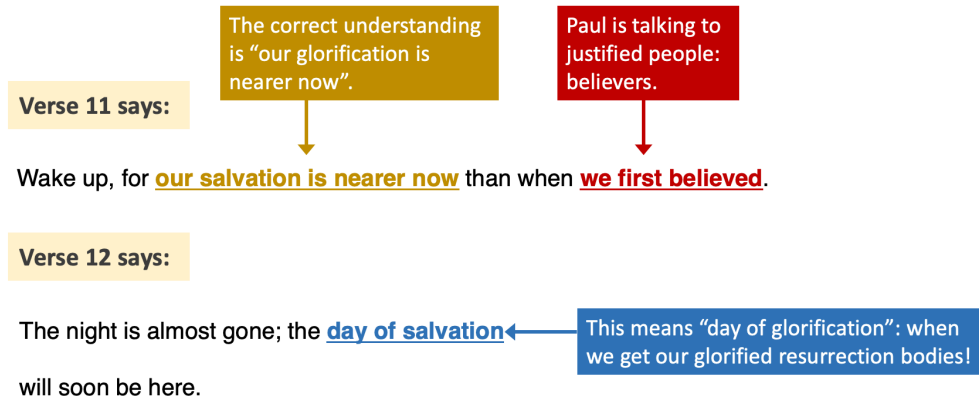
Instead, he is talking about **glorification**, the completion of God’s salvation for us.

Example 2: Paul

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul urges believers in Rome not to be lazy but to be busy with the work that God has for them because their glorification is drawing nearer each day.

Romans 13:11–12

¹¹ This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.



Again, this is not about justification or sanctification. Paul is talking about glorification, being saved from the presence of sin.

Example 3: Writer of Hebrews

The writer of Hebrews reminded his audience of Jewish believers that Jesus is coming again, no longer to deal with the problem of sin, but to bring glorification to believers.

Hebrews 9:27–28

²⁷ And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.



So we can see how important it is to understand that the words "saved" and "salvation" have several meanings in the Bible.

Knowing these different meanings will help ensure we don't end up with the wrong conclusions.



How can I be careful about reading the Bible so I don't confuse myself or misunderstand God's Word?

Here are some principles on studying the Bible carefully.

1. **Understand that Scripture builds upon Scripture.** The New Testament writers quoted from their Bible, the Old Testament. They explained what Jesus taught based on what Yahweh had already revealed in the Old Testament.

They are showing that we can't read and understand the New Testament in a vacuum.

In fact, Jesus fully expects believers to know our Old Testament well. It is not optional. This is what He said.



<p>Matthew 12:3 Jesus said to them, "<u>Haven't you read</u> in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"</p>	<p>Matthew 12:5 <u>And haven't you read</u> in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath?"</p>	<p>Matthew 19:4 "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'"</p>	<p>Matthew 22:31a "But now, as to whether there will be a resurrection of the dead—<u>haven't you ever read</u> about this in the Scriptures?"</p>	<p>Mark 12:10 <u>Didn't you ever read</u> this in the Scriptures? 'The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.'</p>
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To understand the Bible well, we need to read all of it, not just parts of it. Just as we cannot expect to understand a novel just by reading several paragraphs, it will be difficult to understand all of God's Word if we only read some of it.

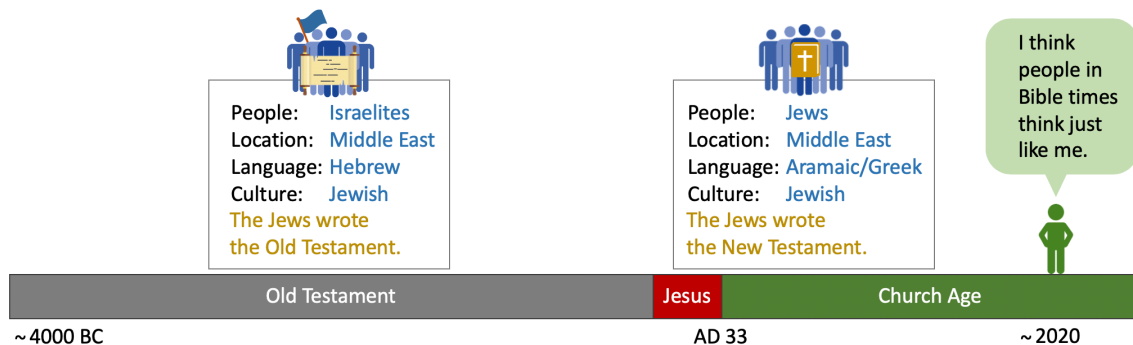
2. **Use the context questions.** To better understand the passage, we should understand:
 1. Who is the writer?
 2. Who is the audience?
 3. What is the topic of discussion?
 4. What is the context of the passage, chapter and book?



For example, most of the book of Job is about what five people (Job and his companions) were saying to each other. Without understanding the context, we might just read what Job's companions said about God and think they are true.

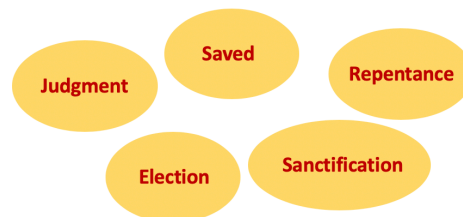
Yet at the end of the book of Job, God said that He was angry with them because they were not right in what they said (Job 42:7)! Without understanding the context, we can really misunderstand the Bible.

In addition, we need to remember that Bible times are very foreign to us in terms of culture, society, environment, language, etc. It is far safer to assume that we need to learn how they communicate rather than to read our own meaning into what was written.



3. **Know that certain words in the Bible have multiple meanings.** We must not be too quick to apply the meaning we are most familiar with. For example, aside from “salvation” and “saved”, here are some other words in the Bible that have more than one meaning.

Some Bible words with multiple meanings



- **Sanctification:** In this study, we use the word “sanctification” to mean “saved from the power of sin”. However, note that in the Bible, the word “sanctification” also has three meanings.
 - Meaning 1: saved from the penalty of sin or justification (1 Corinthians 1:30).
 - Meaning 2: saved from the power of sin (John 17:17).
 - Meaning 3: saved from the presence of sin or glorification (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- **Elect:** the Bible refers to different “elect”. For example, Israel (Matthew 24:31), believers (Titus 1:1), angels (1 Timothy 5:21).

- **Repentance:** the Bible talks about unbelievers repenting and turning to God for justification (Acts 2:38) but also believers repenting from bad choices in life (2 Corinthians 12:21).
- **Judgment:** this sometimes refers to God's disciplinary judgment on believers (1 Peter 4:17) and sometimes it means eternal judgment (John 5:24). Other times it just simply means an opinion (Acts 15:19).

4. **Use what we clearly know about the Bible to help us understand passages that aren't so clear.** Some Bible passages are difficult to understand. In those cases, we need to remember that biblical truths don't change from passage to passage. We should not change the meaning of passages that are clear and base our convictions on passages that are not so clear.

Most of all, pray for God's guidance, wisdom and discernment as we humbly and diligently study the Word of God.



What about Works?

We have seen the work that God does for us. Yahweh is the One who:

- Justifies us (through the work of God the Son)
- Sanctifies us (through the work of God the Holy Spirit) and
- Glorifies us so that we can glorify Him.

But do believers have to do any "work"? Yes.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Work is important in a believer's life because Yahweh will evaluate our performance.

The Judgment Seat of Christ: The Review

Before God's Kingdom physically returns to earth, all believers will come before God at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God will **review** our lives and how we lived as believers.

Romans 14:10c, 12

¹⁰ Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹² Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God.

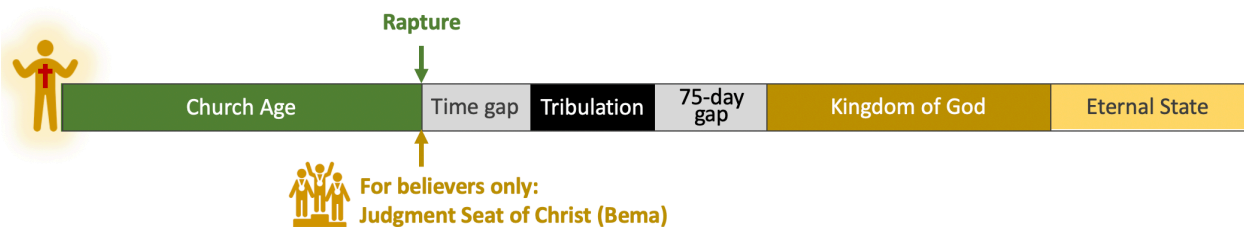
2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (NIV)

⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The phrase “the judgment seat of Christ” is translated from a single Greek word “bema” (Pronounced Bay-mah).

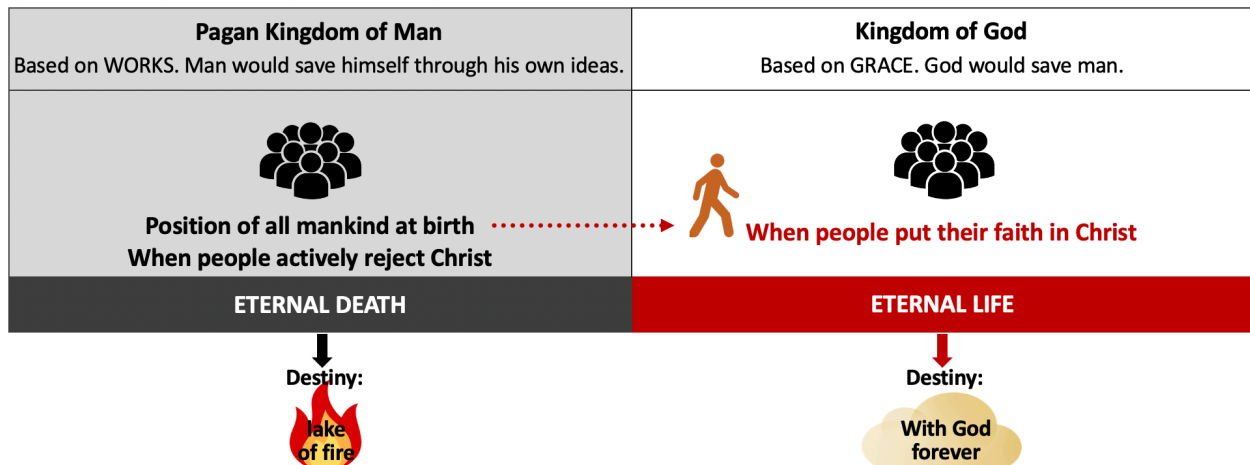


The bema is a raised platform where judges in Greek and Roman times will sit to judge cases brought before them. (An example is Pilate sitting on the bema to judge Christ. See Matthew 27:19 and John 19:13. Other examples of “bema” as the place of judgment are Acts 18:12, 25:6,10.)



Our eternal fate (eternal life with Yahweh or eternal separation in the lake of fire) is not decided at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Where we will spend eternity would have already been determined based on our decision about Jesus while we are alive (John 5:24).



After the rapture, all believers will face the Bema. But what is the point of the Judgment Seat of Christ?

The Judgment Seat of Christ: The Reward

The purpose of the Bema review is to **reward** believers for the work they have done for Christ.

In the following passage, Paul is talking about how God will evaluate preachers and teachers based on how they have contributed to building Christ's church. But the principle he uses is that God will evaluate believers on how we have built our lives on the foundation of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15

¹⁰ Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful.

¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.

¹² Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw.

¹³ But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. ¹⁴ If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.

The foundation of our lives is faith in Jesus Christ. We can build on this foundation with precious materials: gold, silver and jewels. These are good works done for God that are valuable. (The deeds can be small, like jewels, but they can be worth a lot!)

At the Bema, God will put them through a fire. We will be rewarded for the works that survive.



Works that are made of wood, hay or straw are worthless in God's eyes. They will be burnt up and we will lose our rewards.

In fact, Paul says that some believers will have nothing to show for their lives. They will receive eternal life (because that is secured by Jesus) but they will smell of smoke!

But what are considered “good” works and what are “bad” or useless works?

Paul explains:

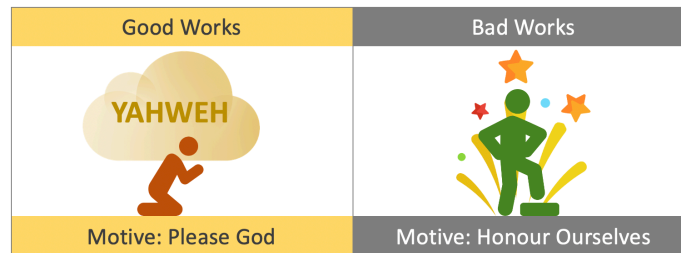
1 Corinthians 4:5

So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

“Good” works are done with the right motive, which is to please and honour God. “Bad” works are done with the wrong motive—to please and honour ourselves. Jesus explains:

Matthew 6:1, 4

¹ “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.



Note that God does not evaluate our lives before we put our faith in Christ. Both our past sins and “good works” are not included at the Bema. Our sins have been forgiven by Jesus and what we think are “good works” are not valuable in God’s eyes because they were not done in faith.

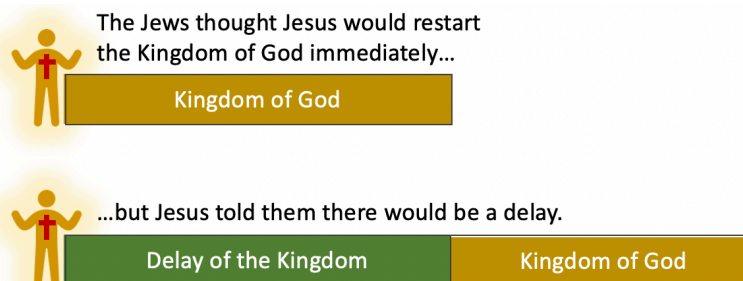
What are the Rewards?

Roles and responsibilities in the coming Kingdom of God

There will be many roles and jobs in the coming Kingdom of God. God wants responsible believers to be in charge of other believers, areas of work, cities, nations and more.

Some people think that the Kingdom will be like the utopia promised but never achieved by communism—a state without hierarchy or rank. However, the Bible says that Jesus will hand out different levels of rewards and honours, as well as roles and responsibilities to believers (see for example, Matthew 5:19). These rewards will be based on how we are evaluated by God at the Bema.

When the Jews thought that Jesus was about to restart the Kingdom of God immediately, Jesus told them the Parable of the Ten Servants or Ten Minas. Jesus said there would be a delay in the return of the Kingdom.



And like the nobleman in the parable, He would go away for a time and then return when God the Father gave Him the Kingdom. In the meantime, Jesus explained to them that this waiting period was a time of testing.

Luke 19:11–27

¹¹ The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. And because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told them a story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away.

¹² He said, “A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return. ¹³ Before he left, he called together ten of his servants and divided among them ten pounds of silver, saying, ‘Invest this for me while I am gone.’ ¹⁴ But his people hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We do not want him to be our king.’



¹⁵ “After he was crowned king, he returned and called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what their profits were. ¹⁶ The first servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!’

¹⁷ “‘Well done!’ the king exclaimed. ‘You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.’

¹⁸ “The next servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made five times the original amount.’

¹⁹ “‘Well done!’ the king said. ‘You will be governor over five cities.’

²⁰ “But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, ‘Master, I hid your money and kept it safe. ²¹ I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn’t yours and harvesting crops you didn’t plant.’

²² “‘You wicked servant!’ the king roared. ‘Your own words condemn you. If you knew that I’m a hard man who takes what isn’t mine and harvests crops I didn’t plant, ²³ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁴ “Then, turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.’

²⁵ “‘But, master,’ they said, ‘he already has ten pounds!’

²⁶ “‘Yes,’ the king replied, ‘and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.

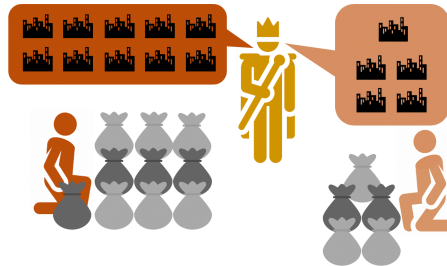
²⁷ And as for these enemies of mine who didn’t want me to be their king—bring them in and execute them right here in front of me.’”

Each of the king's servants was given a sum of money ("minas"). Each mina was worth about a pound (½ kilogram) of silver or about three months' pay. This is a picture of how God gives every believer spiritual gifts to use or an area of responsibility to take care of while we wait for the coming Kingdom. Our "mina" may be our money, our family, our job, our church ministry or a spiritual gift. It is whatever Jesus has placed in our lives for us to work on.

At the appointed time, the king returned to start the kingdom. He reviewed all the work that his servants had done.

Good work

The first two servants are a picture of faithful believers who worked hard with the minas that God had given them. So they were put in charge of a number of cities. That was their reward for the good evaluation they received from the king.



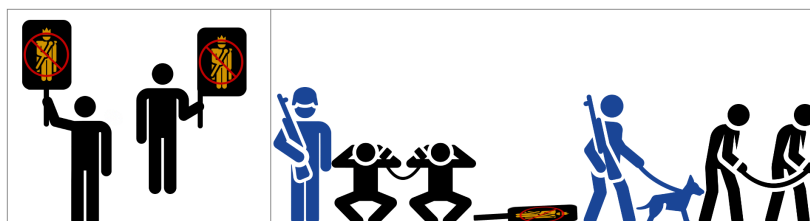
Bad work

The third servant did not do anything with the mina the king gave him. The king had a very harsh evaluation of him. This lazy servant was still in the kingdom (still saved from the penalty of sin), but he ended up with no role.



Unbelievers

As for the people who rejected the king, they were all killed. They will be cast away from the presence of King Jesus.



This parable is both an encouragement and a warning to believers. Will we do the work that God has given to us and be rewarded with responsibilities and privileges in the Kingdom of God? Or will we ignore the work He gave us and lose our rewards?

(See also Jesus' command to store up treasure in heaven: Matthew 6:19; Luke 12:33.)

Some of us may feel that we will end up with no reward because even our best work may not please God. However, Jesus does not want us to feel that way. He told the Parable of the Vineyard Workers to show that He is a generous judge.

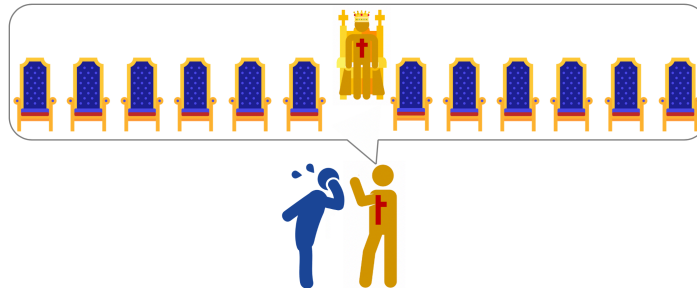
Jesus: The Generous Judge

Jesus' disciples wanted to know their reward for following Him.

Matthew 19:27–30

²⁷ Then Peter said to him, "We've given up everything to follow you. What will we get?"

²⁸ Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.



Jesus told His disciples their exact reward: thrones and leadership roles in the coming Kingdom. Then in the very next verses, Jesus went on to say that He will also reward other believers generously. He explained this with another parable.

Matthew 20:1–16

¹ "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

³ "At nine o'clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. ⁴ So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. ⁵ So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.

⁶ “At five o’clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’

⁷ “They replied, ‘Because no one hired us.’

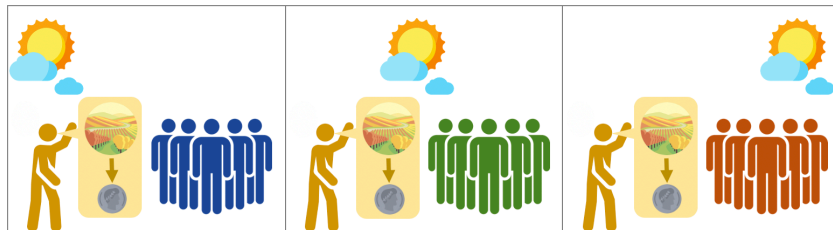
“The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’

⁸ “That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. ⁹ When those hired at five o’clock were paid, each received a full day’s wage. ¹⁰ When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day’s wage. ¹¹ When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, ¹² ‘Those people worked only one hour, and yet you’ve paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.’

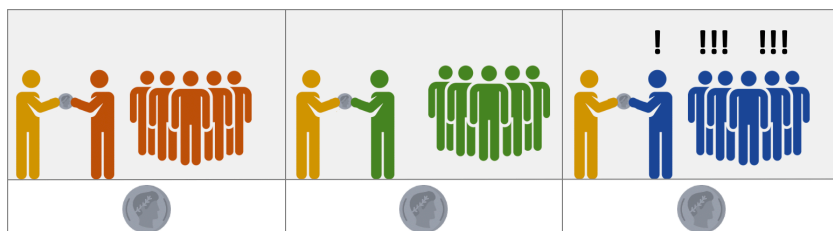
¹³ “He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage? ¹⁴ Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. ¹⁵ Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’

¹⁶ “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.”

The workers who came early knew what their wages would be and they were paid as promised. These workers are the twelve disciples. Jesus had just told them their rewards.



For the other hired workers, they knew they would be paid, but they didn’t know how much. At the end of the day, the vineyard owner surprised the late workers. Though they had only worked part of the day, they still received a full day’s wages!



Jesus was making the point that as a generous Judge, He has every right to give believers rewards that are far greater than the work they put in. Even those who become believers later and have little chance to work hard can still receive great rewards!

This is comforting news for every believer!

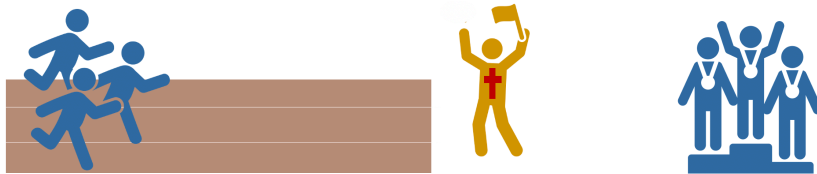
So we don't need to worry that our good works are not enough. We just need to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives and take the opportunities God gives us for good work, knowing He is a generous Judge!

However, we must not be lazy or complacent. We should share Paul's attitude.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27

²⁴ Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! ²⁵ All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.

²⁶ So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. ²⁷ I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.



So what was Paul saying? He didn't want to be a poor "racer" or worker for Christ. If he taught poorly and made other believers stumble, that would hurt his review at the Bema. So Paul diligently watched himself and disciplined himself so that he would be a good runner and would get a good review. We should do the same.

What are the consequences if Christians don't do any "work"?

Some Christians don't care about getting rewards in the future. They are happy with their "ticket to heaven" and are not interested or are too lazy to grow spiritually, listen to the Holy Spirit or allow God to guide their lives. Some even choose to continue to live very ungodly lives.

Are there any consequences in this life for such people? Yes.

Hebrews 12:6

For the LORD disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."



God will not allow His children to run wild and ignore Him.

Here are some examples of God's discipline:

1. Sickness and death

1 Corinthians 11:29–31

²⁹ For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. ³¹ But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way.



2. Excommunication (Thrown out of church fellowship)

1 Corinthians 5:1, 4–5

¹ I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. ⁴ ...You must call a meeting of the church... ⁵ Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.



3. Suffering

Revelation 2:20–22

²⁰ "But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. ²² "Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds.



4. Other forms of discipline

God's plan is for believers to become like His Son. If we don't work on our sanctification and we ignore God, He will get our attention through various means, including sending trials and suffering into our lives for our own good.



Romans 8:28–29a

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. ²⁹ For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son,

What will God do to us or to believers who ignore Him? When will He do it and for how long? We don't know. But God has access to many kinds of discipline to wake us up. It is best not to test God.

(Note that not all suffering in this life is due to God's discipline. There are many types of suffering that are not related to sin. Review Lesson 19: Understanding Suffering.)

In summary, it is best to work hard for our sanctification so we can become more like whom we love: the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us thank God for our justification, cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our sanctification while we eagerly await our glorification and review at the Bema.

What happens to disputes and hurts between believers that never get resolved?

Because of our sin nature, the reality is that even we believers still fight among ourselves. The Bible tells us to reconcile and forgive each other (for example, Matthew 5:23–24), but not all hurts or disputes will be settled in our lifetimes. Does this mean they will never be resolved?



No, Paul taught the believers at Corinth that while not every issue between believers can be settled now, Jesus will do it later.

1 Corinthians 4:3–5

³ As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

⁵ So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.



At the Bema, Christ will expose our secret thoughts and deeds. And He will call on believers who have unresolved disputes with each other. If we have had our reputation ruined by another believer, we can take comfort that the truth will be revealed at the Bema. If we have secretly hurt a brother- or sister-in-Christ, this will be uncovered at the Bema.

That is why Paul advises us not to take revenge but to leave it to Jesus to make judgment on the matter.

Romans 12:19

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,”
says the Lord.

Jesus will perfectly resolve all the messy disputes we had while on earth. He will show clearly who is wrong and who is right. He will address all the injustices.

Believers who have done wrong will finally admit the truth. Victims will be cleared of blame and wrongdoing. Believers will forgive and accept forgiveness. After all these disputes are resolved, everyone will indeed praise God for His justice and righteousness.



Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. Have you ever worried about not being able to see God’s glory clearly? Or do you wonder why you don’t really understand God? Now that we’ve studied what the Bible says about glorification, what do you think? How can we grow in our ability to see God’s glory in this life?
2. The Bible tells us that the way we live our current lives will affect what happens in the eternal life to come. How then should we live and behave? What would you now do differently knowing that you will receive an evaluation from Jesus? What immediate steps can you take so that you will “run the race” well as Paul encourages us to? How can you be more disciplined and purposeful with your life?
3. What do you think is the “mina” that God gave you? Consider your skills, talents and your areas of responsibilities (family, work, ministry, etc.). How can you be more deliberate in doing a good job in all these areas?



Pre-reading for next lesson: Genesis 18:16–19:38; Daniel 4; Ezekiel 31; Luke 1:39–55, 67–79; Matthew 12:22–13:58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:28.

Also review Lessons 29 and 30: The Jewish Expectation, Parts 1 and 2.