

HWMR: EXPERIENCING, ENJOYING, AND EXPRESSING CHRIST (4) (Week 12)

**Christ Coming with Reward and Punishment, a Lamp Shining in a Dark Place,
and Christ Appearing Privately to His Overcomers as the Morning Star**

Scripture Reading: *Rev. 22:12, 16; 2 Pet. 1:19*

- Rev. 22:12 Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one as his work is.
Rev. 22:16 I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star.
2 Pet. 1:19 And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

Day 1

- Rev. 22:12 - Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one as his work is.*
Matt. 16:27 - For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings.

Day 2

- 1 Cor. 3:14 - If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward.*
2 Cor. 5:10 - For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.

I. “Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one as his work is”—Rev. 22:12:

- A. The Lord **repeats** His warning, “I come quickly” (3:11; 22:7), so that **we will consider His reward**, to be rendered at His coming back.
- B. At the Lord’s coming, this **reward will be rendered to each one of the believers**, after their rapture, at the judgment seat of Christ—2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 14:10; Matt. 16:27.
- C. The Greek word translated “**reward**” in Revelation 22:12 means “**wages**.”
- D. When the Lord Jesus comes again to possess the kingdom, He will **reward or punish** all those who belong to Him:
 1. **Some will receive His punishment** because the Lord’s word “My reward is with Me” implies that there is not only reward but also punishment.
 2. In keeping with this, in Revelation 22:7 the Lord declared, “I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this scroll.”

3. He who keeps the words of the prophecy of Revelation is **blessed** because he will be **rewarded**.
4. The reward we receive on that day has much to do with **our attitude today**:
 - a. First Corinthians 3:8 says that we will be rewarded **according to our labor**.
 - b. In Matthew 16:27 the Lord Jesus said that at His coming back He will reward us **according to our doings**.
- E. Eternal salvation has nothing to do with our works, but the **kingdom reward will be altogether according to our works** that we have done by the Lord's life after being saved.
- F. Every saved one will be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad; **those who practice good** will receive a **reward**, and **those who practice evil** will receive **punishment**—2 Cor. 5:10.
- G. We will stand before the judgment seat and give the Lord an **account concerning all our past living, walk, and conduct**; it is because of this that even the apostle Paul says that he dared not examine himself, but He who examined him was the Lord—1 Cor. 4:3-4.
- H. The **way we serve and work** for the Lord after we are saved is a great matter.
 - I. Paul says, "If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward"—3:14.
 - J. When the Lord comes back, there will be a **judgment**; in that judgment He will determine whether we will receive a reward or punishment.
 - K. The reward will be decided by the judgment seat of Christ: "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad"—2 Cor. 5:10.

What we will be given as the Lord's reward in the future is not something that we do not have today; instead, the **reward will be an increased measure of what we experience today**. Whoever does not reign today cannot reign in the future. Whoever does not oversee things for the Lord today cannot oversee things in the kingdom in the future. Rather than just obtaining an objective reward in the future, the approved believers are subjectively living in the reward today. This is a subjective matter. The condition of a believer who obtains the reward will be **one of maturity**. Our reigning in the future will be spontaneous if we live in a condition of reigning today. We will gain a reward in the future if we gain Christ today, and our reward will be more of the Christ whom we are gaining today.

We need to have the basic vision—God's economy of grace is to work Himself into us, and we must pay a price and let Him work in us in this age. **Our cooperation equips us and is an exercise**. The gospel asks us not only to believe but also to be willing to pay the price of forsaking everything. We should not only be saved but also submit to God's authority. If we do, we will receive the reward in the future, and this reward will be exactly what we are experiencing today, only more. In 1 Corinthians 15:19 Paul says, "If it is only that we have hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most miserable." Brother T. Austin-Sparks said that rapture is a matter of maturity of life, not of prophecy. **The reward is not something that is given suddenly; it is the issue of growth in life.** (*Reward and Punishment, chapter 7*)

Day 3

2 Pet. 1:19 - And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

Rom. 13:12 - The night is far advanced, and the day has drawn near. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the weapons of light.

Day 4

Rev. 2:28 - And to him I will give the morning star.

2 Tim. 4:8 - Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

II. “We have the **prophetic word** made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a **lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts**”—2 Pet. 1:19:

- A. Peter likens the **word of prophecy** in the Scripture to a **lamp shining in a dark place**:
 - 1. This indicates that **this age is a dark place** in the dark night (Rom. 13:12), and all the people of this world are **moving and acting in darkness**.
 - 2. The **prophetic word of the Scripture**, as the shining lamp to the believers, conveys **spiritual light that shines in their darkness** (not merely knowledge in letters for their mental apprehension), guiding them to enter into a bright day, even to pass through the dark night until the day of the Lord’s appearing dawns.
 - 3. Before the Lord as the sunlight appears, we need this word as light to **shine over our footsteps**.
- B. *The day dawns* (2 Pet. 1:19) is a metaphor illustrating a **coming time that will be full of light**, as a bright day dawning, with the morning star rising, before its dawning, in the hearts of the believers, who are illuminated and enlightened by giving heed to the shining word of prophecy in the Scripture:
 - 1. In the time of apostasy the believers do well to give heed in this matter, that the prophetic word, as a lamp, may shine through the darkness of apostasy until such a day dawns upon them.
 - 2. This will cause and encourage them to **earnestly seek the Lord’s presence** and **be watchful** so that they will not miss the Lord in the secret part of His coming (parousia), when He will come as a thief.
 - 3. This metaphor must allude to the **coming age**, the age of the kingdom, as a day that will dawn at the appearing (the coming) of the Lord (v. 16) as the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), whose **light will shine to break through the gloom of the dark night** of this age.

4. Preceding this, in the darkest hour of the night the Lord will appear as the morning star (Rev. 2:28; 22:16) to those who are **watchful** and **looking for His dear appearing** (2 Tim. 4:8).
5. They have been **enlightened** by the shining of the **prophetic word**, which is able to **lead them** to the dawning day.
6. If we **give heed to the word** in the Bible, which shines as a lamp in a dark place, **we will have His rising in our hearts** to shine in the darkness of apostasy where we are today, before His actual appearing as the morning star.

To have the Bible in your hands is one thing; **to take heed** to the Word until the daystar rises in your heart is another. **To have the knowledge** of the Bible is one thing, but **to have a shining star** rising in your spirit is another. Just to go to the seminary to study the Bible means nothing. What we need today is **to take the Word into us, to take heed to the living Word** until something within rises and shines in our heart. Then we will have the star, and then we will be a star. This is not just the knowledge about Christ, but Christ Himself as the living star.

People say that we do not care for the Bible, but we do not admit this. If there are believers on this earth who love the divine Word, I believe we must be numbered among them. We love the Word, but not in the dead way of letters. **We love the Word by taking heed to it** until something within is dawning and arising in our heart—not the knowledge, not the written code, but the breaking through of day, the rising of the shining star.

What does this mean in practical experience? Sometimes we may take the Bible, read it, and get nothing. But sometimes when we **open our heart** and **take heed** to this sure Word, something within is shining, rising, dawning, breaking through. While we are pray-reading the verses of the Bible, there is a sense deep within of enlightening, of shining. And this shining creates a kind of love toward the Lord Jesus. We feel that He is so lovable. We could say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You; I do not have words to express how lovely You are!" Many times by this shining we are just beside ourselves with love to the Lord Jesus. That is Jesus coming to us as the dawning day, as the daystar rising in our hearts. I am not speaking of something I've learned from others, and I am not boasting; this is my actual experience. Many times when I was with this Holy Word, something has risen within me like the daybreak. Oh, it is wonderful! The situation may be extremely dull, the surrounding full of darkness, but something within is enlightening, shining, filling with glory.

In the days of the wise men, the seeing of the star was a miraculous occurrence, **but today to see the daystar is only normal and should be our regular experience**. Day by day we need to have the daystar arising within our hearts. Do not just read the Bible, and do not just pray-read the Bible; you must take heed to the sure Word until the day dawns and the daystar arises in your heart. Go on until you reach this point.

So, you see, the star today **comes from the living Word**. I am so happy that in this verse we have the Word and the daystar together. Firstly, we have the Word; secondly, by taking heed to the sure Word, we have the daystar rising in our heart. If we will just go along continually with this inner, rising star, we will constantly be in the Spirit and be a good follower of Christ.

(Finding Christ by the Living Star, Chapter 1)

Day 5

Rev. 22:16 - I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star.

Mal. 4:2 - But unto you who fear My name will the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings, and you will go forth and leap about like well-fed calves.

Day 6

Rev. 22:7 - And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this scroll.

Rev. 22:20 - He who testifies these things says, Yes, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

III. “I am the **Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star**”—Rev. 22:16b:

- A. **Christ**, who is signified by the heavenly luminaries, the lights, is the **bright morning star**—v. 16b.
- B. At His coming back Christ will be the **rising sun** to His **people generally** (Mal. 4:2) but the **morning star** to **His watchful lovers particularly**.
- C. The **latter** will be a **reward** to the overcomers: “I will give the morning star”—Rev. 2:28.
- D. Christ as the **Root and Offspring of David** is related to **Israel and the kingdom**, whereas His being the **bright morning star** is related to the **church and the rapture**.
- E. The morning star **appears before the darkest hour**, prior to the dawn.
- F. The great tribulation will be this darkest time, after which the day of the kingdom will dawn; this indicates that **Christ will appear as the bright morning star in the darkest time**, prior to the close of this age.
- G. In the kingdom the Lord will appear **publicly** to His people as the sun, but before the great tribulation He will appear **privately** to His overcomers as the morning star to rapture them.
- H. The bright morning star will appear **only to the watchful ones**.
 - I. The **slumbering believers will not see** the morning star; they will see Christ **only as the sun in a general way**.
 - J. The **watchful ones** will have the **priority to taste the freshness of His presence** at His coming back after a long absence.
 - K. The entire Bible concludes with the **desire for the Lord’s coming** expressed as a **prayer**.
 - L. John’s prayer in Revelation 22:20 is the last prayer in the Bible.
 - M. “He who testifies these things says, Yes, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”—v. 20.

Not only is Christ Himself the star, but also His followers, the shining ones in the churches. In the Acts and the Epistles the leading ones were called elders or bishops, but in the last book of the Bible they are the stars. Now it is not a matter of title or position, but a **matter of shining**. All the living ones of the local churches must be shining stars.

What does it mean to be a star? Daniel 12:3 gives the answer: *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."* The stars are **those who shine in darkness and turn people from the wrong way to the right way**. Now, during the church age, is the time of night; so we need the shining of the stars. All the leading ones in the local churches should never claim their position: they should never say, "I am one of the elders; you must recognize me." If they say this, they are in darkness. We need the brothers and sisters who shine; we need the shining stars. It is by the shining in today's darkness that people receive the guidance and are turned from the wrong way to the right way. Anything that is wrong is unrighteousness; anything that is right is righteousness. Those who turn many to righteousness are the stars which shine forever and ever.

In the beginning of the New Testament there was only one star in the heavens, but in the end of the New Testament there are seven stars in seven local churches. **In every local church there is a star; in every local church there is something shining, leading people to the right way**. About forty years ago, I was turned from the wrong way to the right way by this star in the local church. So many dear ones today can also testify to this fact; they can say, "Hallelujah, I have seen the star in the local church. It was the star in the church that turned me to the right way." Today we are not in the age of Matthew 1 and 2, but in the age of the Book of Revelation, in the local churches. Today the star is in the local churches. The Bible ends with this word: "And I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, come" (Rev. 22:16-17). Today the star is with the Spirit and with the Bride. **Where the Spirit is, there is the star; where the Bride, the church, is, there is the star.**

(Finding Christ by the Living Star, Chapter 1)