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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: **Will there be degrees of rewards and punishments?**

Before giving a direct answer to this question, let me make some preliminary observations.

**FIRST: God is good whether or not man can understand why He does things.** "Good and upright is the Lord" (Ps 25:8).

**SECOND: God is also just.** The Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen 18:25). As human beings, we are limited in our knowledge and wisdom. We do not always appreciate the reality of God's justice – but He is just whether we understand it fully or not.

**THIRD: Those who spend eternity cut-off from the presence of the Lord will deserve it.** "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) and eternal death is separation from the presence of the Lord (Rev 20:14-15).

**FOURTH: Those who spend eternity in heaven will be there, not because they deserve it, but because of the graciousness of the Lord.** Jesus came to save sinners (Mt 18:11). Those who obey Him, He will save (Heb 5:8-9).

Now ... having said all this, let me now address the question at hand: **Will there be degrees of reward and punishment?** Listen to the following passages of scripture and you be the judge of what the Bible teaches:

## **Matthew 11:20-24**

<sup>20</sup> Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:

<sup>21</sup> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

<sup>22</sup> But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

<sup>23</sup> And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

<sup>24</sup> But I say to you that it shall be **more tolerable** for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

Focus on the words "more tolerable." What does that imply? Doesn't that imply degrees of punishment?

### **Luke 12:47-48**

<sup>47</sup> And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with **many stripes**.

<sup>48</sup> But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with **few**. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

This passage seems to clearly teach degrees of punishment – don't you think.

On the other hand, what about rewards? Will there be rewards in heaven for those who go there? Listen to these passages:

### **Luke 19:11-19**

<sup>11</sup> Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

<sup>13</sup> So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'

<sup>15</sup> "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

<sup>16</sup> Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'

<sup>17</sup> And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

<sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'  
<sup>19</sup> Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

Does this not teach rewards based on work performed? The ones having sacrificed more and having produce more were rewarded more?

Although everyone in heaven will be equally happy, it does not appear that everyone will be equally rewarded. While there will be no jealousy in heaven, this passage teaches definitely that there will be degrees of reward.

### **Matthew 10:41**

<sup>41</sup> He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

This passage indicates there are rewards especially suited for prophets and righteous men. When we behave like them, we receive rewards like they received.

So the answer is: **Yes, the scriptures do teach degrees of reward and punishment.** Men who are especially evil (like Hitler and Stalin) will not only be punished, but they will be punished with more severity than others. Likewise, those who had opportunities to hear the word of God, but neglected it, will be punished more severely than those who never had the opportunity at all.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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