

Rod of Iron and Eternal Rewards

8/17/2015

Introduction

Since the release of my book, *Rewards are Eternal* (RAE), and my supplemental article, “Rewards are Eternal Supplemental Studies” (RAESS), the latter of which deals with objections to that thesis,¹ one objector has sought to maintain the allusion that Revelation 2-3 makes it apparent that rewards cannot be eternal in scope by claiming: “Simply there is no different way to view rewards after the Millennium **as the scriptures clearly teach that rewards, both positive and negative are Millennial only. Two or three minutes in the overcomers’ promises in Revelation Chapter[s] 2-3 comparing what’s found there with conditions as they will exist in the endless ages would make this very obvious.**” This same objector continues: “**Any attempt to blend the 7th Day and/or circumstances connected with it into the endless ages so that things continue in the same way from one to the other, which this ideology does, destroys the foundation** and opens the door to further multiplied scriptural error - and it is this that makes the unmasking of this deception so imperative - this is not a small thing.”²

I agree with the objector that our differences on this matter can lead to “multiplied scriptural error.” For example, because this objector denies that rewards are eternal, he insists that Judas is saved and will rule with Christ throughout eternity future. Our differences on the eternity of rewards is certainly no small matter. The objector’s position leads him to the erroneous conclusion that many of those whom the Scripture indicates are unregenerate are in fact regenerate, thereby wiping out the foundational distinction between *soteriology* (the doctrine of salvation) and *misthology* (the doctrine of rewards) in many key texts. Additionally, his misthology becomes virtually impotent since he renders rewards as unimportant in light of eternity. For instance, his misthology leads him to conclude that Peter and Paul will be no better off than Judas or any other apostate in the eternal state. In short, this objector is teaching that in eternity future it does not matter if you lived for Christ during your earthly life because misthological distinctions are done away with after one thousand years. Truly, unmasking this objector’s deception is imperative. A mistake of this magnitude is certainly disastrous.

For connivance’s sake, I will refer to this objector, as *PJ*, which is short for *Pope John*. When PJ was asked by the reader who sent me this email if he and PJ might discuss these matters in a Berean spirit, PJ responded that a Berean spirit meant to interpret Scripture properly, which, according to PJ, means to interpret it the way he does. There is “no middle ground” to embracing PJ’s position, just the way he presents it, because, according to PJ, “there really is no ambiguity.” I do not mind PJ thinking that he is right. I believe I am right also. But for PJ to redefine the *Berean spirit* to mean *to interpret Scripture the way he does* manifests an arrogance, reminiscent of the dogma of the papal infallibility held by the Catholic Church. Even within Catholicism itself, however, there is debate as to whether Pope John Paul II’s limitation of the priestly ordination to men alone is truly infallible. Similarly, even though PJ thinks that the Berean spirit means to regard him as some kind of Protestant Pope who is infallible in this matter, I will challenge his alleged infallibility by showing the fallibility of his interpretation regarding the eternity of rewards. For this reason PJ, short for Pope John, serves as a suitable pseudonym for this objector within this discussion. As a byproduct, this rebuttal will demonstrate pragmatically that the *Berean spirit* is best understood to mean that *we need to show an eagerness to examine the Scripture so see whether the interpretive claims being made about it are true* (Acts 17:11).

Although PJ did not want to have his position examined in the light of Scripture, I welcome such examination. But then again, I am no Protestant Pope. I am not infallible. I appeal to Scripture as the final arbitrator in interpretive disputes and seek to grow from those disputes, knowing that I am to be judged at the Bema for my accuracy in teaching (2Tim 2:15; Jam 3:1). Therefore, maintaining a Berean spirit that is open to correction is prudent. Some may be dismayed by such interpretive differences, but I consider them part of the growing process, a necessary means to qualifying for kingdom rulership. I like how the NIV interprets 1Cor 11:19: “No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval.” Let us examine the issue carefully, for God’s approval at the Bema may very well be at stake. Wiedenheft offers these heartening comments on this verse:

If every doctrine were spelled out so precisely that there would be no room for different interpretations, Christians would tend to go to sleep intellectually—they would stop thinking and learning—they would stop using their God-given minds. Christianity would become a “cookbook” religion (just blindly follow the recipes for every situation) and “babes in Christ” would never grow up to spiritual

¹ See http://misthology.org/pdf/articles/Rewards_are_Eternal_Supplemental_Studies.pdf.

² Personal correspondence, 7-30-2015. Emphasis added.

adulthood.

As it is, the Bible spells out clearly the essentials of salvation and of God's will for man. But it provides considerable latitude for Christians to mature spiritually—by making decisions—by learning to apply God's will in their lives. Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb 5:8) and Christians learn the same way—through experience, through problems and suffering, through controversy, and uncertainty and adversity.

When we see Christians scattered among various organizations, when we see differing opinions and controversies in the Church, we tend to look at the problems they cause and get discouraged. But God can also see the growth taking place in His children and He rejoices. For He wants His true Children to be clean, white, and mature. And so they will be—refined in the fires of controversies, differences and problems—including those within the Church. So while we pray and work for love and harmony among true Christians, let us not despair when we see divisions in the Church—for God is using them to accomplish His great purpose.³

Growth pains hurt, but they enable us to mature so that we can be qualified to rule. Part of this growth process involves learning how to balance the complexity of Scripture with its perspicuity. PJ told the reader who asked him if they could discuss these matters in a Berean spirit that my article defending the eternal nature of rewards is “dreadfully wrong scripturally...for those who persist in teaching this degree of error and for those drawn away by it, the end cannot be anything but disastrous.”⁴ Really now? Does this make any sense given his own teaching? Whereas PJ poses that the results of following my teaching will be disastrous for one thousand years, I counter that those following him in his error are in grave danger of suffering disastrous results for one thousand years plus eternity. According to his teaching, if you follow my teaching, then after one thousand years you will rule with Christ for all eternity. According to my teaching, if you follow his teaching, then you stand to lose out on ruling with Christ for one thousand years and then for all eternity. Whose teaching is really disastrous in its potential scope? Do the math.

Three Allegedly Problematic Rewards

Given PJ's affinity for the writings of Chitwood, PJ's opinion regarding Rev 2-3 is apparently derived, to a considerable extent, from the position taken by Chitwood regarding that passage and the rod of iron in particular. So let us turn to Chitwood for more detailed explanation and defense of PJ's position:

(Note, for example, the overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three. That these promises are *millennial only* in nature is made plain by several of the promises.

In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Smyrna, it is evident that death will exist during the Millennium [Rev. 2:11; cf. Rom. 8:13]; but this will not be the case beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages [Rev. 21:1, 4]. In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Thyatira, ruling with “a rod of iron” is in view [2:26, 27]. And no such scene as this exists during the present dispensation; nor will such a scene exist during the eternal ages. Then, in the overcomer's promise to the Church in Laodicea, Christ's throne is in view. Christ is not seated on His Own throne today; nor will this throne exist separate from the Father's throne beyond the Millennium [cf. Heb. 1:13; Rev. 3:21; 22:1, 3].

Thus, it is plain that the things seen in the overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three can be realized during *the Messianic Era alone*. They can have nothing to do with the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.⁵ (Italics and inserts his; highlight mine.)

Alleged Perspicuity Support for TR

As seen in the quote above, Chitwood is basing his argument that the rewards listed in Rev 2-3 “have nothing to do with the eternal ages” on three of the rewards listed there: (1) not being hurt by the second death, (2) ruling with a rod of iron, and (3) sitting with Christ on His throne. According to PJ, taking the time to read the list of rewards mentioned in Rev 2-3 and comparing those rewards with the state of affairs as they will exist in the eternal state supposedly makes it “very obvious” that rewards are millennial only, not eternal. Chitwood likewise says that it “is plain...they can have

³ Richard A. Wiedenheft, “Why are there Divisions in the Church?” Accessed 7-30-2015. Available at <http://www.servantsnews.com/sn9506/division.htm>.

⁴ Personal correspondence, 7-30-2015.

⁵ Arlen L. Chitwood, *The Time of the End: A Study About the Book of Revelation* (Norman, OK: The Lamp Broadcast, Inc., 2011), 439.

nothing to do with the eternal ages.”

To the contrary, as an advocate of the *eternal reward* (ER) position, I believe (1) that a simple reading of the passage in Rev 2-3 suggests that rewards are eternal and (2) that an accurate understanding of the eternal state in Rev 21-22 confirms this impression. For PJ to say that the *temporary reward* (TR) position follows obviously is not to speak honestly. Even Chitwood acknowledges as much in the very chapter in which he made the above statement:

The wiping away of all tears at the conclusion of the Millennium and the fact that the overcomer’s promises are millennial only in nature would clearly indicate that distinctions which existed during the millennial age between overcoming and nonovercoming Christians will not exist during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium. But, to take matters beyond this point and say that *no rewards* exercised by overcoming Christians during the millennial age will extend over into the eternal ages following the Millennium (or have any bearing on the place which they will occupy following the Millennium) would be carrying matters beyond Scriptural grounds. Scripture simply does not deal with the matter.⁶ (Italics his.)

At this juncture we are faced with a discrepancy between Chitwood and PJ. After all, contrary to Chitwood’s statement here, PJ claims: “**The scriptures clearly teach that rewards, both positive and negative are Millennial only.**” Contrarily, Chitwood asserts that to “say that *no rewards* exercised by overcoming Christians during the millennial age will extend over into the eternal ages...would be carrying matters beyond Scriptural grounds” (emphasis his). According to Chitwood, PJ’s statement goes beyond Scripture. Evidently, the Scriptures do not clearly teach that rewards are millennial only, either that or Chitwood clearly missed it at this point in his writing!

PJ is not the only one who has clearly overstated his case, however. Chitwood has as well. In both *The Outer Darkness* (TOD) and *Rewards are Eternal* (RAE), I have presented considerable evidence in favor of concluding that the wiping away of tears is a reward limited to overcomers. Therefore, I contend that Chitwood’s appeal to this text actually backfires and destroys his case. Moreover, I have proven in RAE that, given Chitwood’s own premises, the Scripture is not silent about the eternal nature of rewards. Rather, Scripture uses various means, such as the plural form of *aion*, to affirm that rewards are eternal.

Nevertheless, as to the matter at hand, Chitwood has failed to prove that “overcomer’s promises are millennial only in nature.” He merely has shown that there will be some differences pertaining to some of the rewards, an assessment with which I would fully agree. Therefore, for PJ to state that the ER ideology asserts that “things continue in the same way” from the millennial state to the eternal state is to misstate the ER position. He is not dealing honestly with the ER position when he uses such a strawman caricature. Those holding the ER position do not believe that everything continues in exactly the same fashion after the transition to the eternal state. For TR advocates to insinuate otherwise is very unwise in that it gives the impression that they are unwilling, or unable, to deal honestly either with the biblical text or with those holding the ER perspective. Such objectors call their own integrity into question when they respond so superficially.

For my part, however, in order to deal as honestly as possible with the opposing position, let me note, as I did in RAE, that it appears that Chitwood has moved beyond his statement above, which merely says that Scripture is silent about ER, so as to conclude that Scripture actually does deny ER. For he says in another book:

Scripture deals with *millennial rewards and/or loss*, never with eternal rewards and/or loss. This should be easy enough for anyone to understand, for if rewards are eternal, so is loss of rewards. And loss of rewards involves an association with *death* (Rom. 8:13), something which Scripture clearly reveals will be done away with at the beginning of the eternal ages beyond the Millennium (I Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4).⁷ (Emphasis his.)

Chitwood’s deductive argument amounts to this:

1. “If rewards are eternal, so is loss of rewards.”
2. “Loss of rewards involves an association with *death*.”
3. *Death* “will be done away with at the beginning of the eternal ages.”
4. Therefore, rewards are not eternal.

If Chitwood is correct in his first three statements, then the proper conclusion for his deductive argument is that *rewards are not eternal*, not that Scripture is silent about whether rewards are eternal. His deductive argument necessitates a denial

⁶ Ibid., 440.

⁷ Arlen L. Chitwood, *Mysteries of the Kingdom*, revised (2011), 166.

of eternal rewards. PJ is correct to deny that rewards are eternal—if Chitwood is correct in his deduction. Consequently, this deduction is not as clear as PJ would make it out to be in that Chitwood, who is the very one who made this argument in *Mysteries of the Kingdom*, failed to perceive its full force, at least in his book, *Time of the End*. And his statements in both of these books were from that same year—2011. Nonetheless, one cannot consider PJ consistent in that he also said, “But it would be wrong to say that no reward would carry over into the endless ages or that ruling with Christ during the Kingdom will have no bearing on the position to be held by those who did so, during the eternal ages, because scripture just does not address the matter.”⁸ PJ has pigged backed upon Chitwood’s argument to such an extent that he followed Chitwood in this inconsistency and thereby has proven his own fallibility. PJ is not the infallible interpreter he makes himself out to be. Pragmatically, a biblical Berean spirit is called for since PJ has proven his fallibility—a Protestant Pope who contradicts himself. On the one hand, he says that Scripture does not tell us if some rewards carry over into the eternal state; on the other hand, he says, “The scriptures clearly teach that rewards, both positive and negative are Millennial only.” If TR advocates are having so much trouble being consistent, perhaps their position is not as clear as they allege.

No Death

In *Rewards are Eternal*, I already have shown the superiority of ER to TR in regard to the no-death promise. In short, the promise of no form of death of any type in Rev 21:4 is a reward promised and limited to overcomers according to Rev 21:7 (and its broader context and background and logical considerations). Unfaithful believers, that is, subcomers, will be hurt by the second death eternally in that they will experience misthological death in the form of loss of misthological life forever. The free gift of eternal life assures all believers of being with Christ in His kingdom and thus saved from the Lake of Fire both during the millennial age and the eternal state. The reward aspect of eternal life, however, such as eating of the tree of life and wearing the crown of life, is limited to faithful believers (i.e., overcomers) both during the millennial age and eternal state. The promise of not being hurt by the second death in Rev 2:11 is limited to such overcomers and is best taken as indicating that subcomers (i.e., unfaithful believers) will be hurt by the second death eternally.

Chitwood claims otherwise: “It is the overcomer’s promise to the Church in Smyrna which has to do with the lake of fire, something which can *only be millennial* within its scope of fulfillment. That is, the conditions alluded to for the nonovercomer in this promise will exist for *the duration of the Messianic Era*, not throughout the eternal ages beyond” (emphasis his).⁹ But why is being hurt by the Lake of Fire limited to the millennial age? The lost will certainly be hurt by the Lake of Fire during both the millennial age and eternal state. If unfaithful believers can be hurt by the second death throughout the course of the millennial kingdom without endangering the gift-reward differentiation regarding eternal life, then why can they not be hurt by the second death in the eternal state as well without doing violence to this distinction?

Contrary to Chitwood, various theories are possible to explain how Rev 2:11 could have eternal misthological implications. For one thing, many interpreters would just take the verse as a litotes. If this is correct, then Rev 2:11 is not saying that unfaithful believers will be hurt by the second death. Personally, though, I am inclined to agree with Chitwood that unfaithful believers will be hurt by the second death. I discuss these various options in TOD. As discussed therein, Chitwood prefers to say that unfaithful believers will be hurt metaphorically by the second death; I prefer to say that they will be hurt correlatively by the second death. Just as unbelievers are hurt soteriologically by the Lake of Fire, so unfaithful believers could be hurt correlatively by the Lake of Fire—both for eternity. This correlative model is the misthological model I posed in TOD. Unfaithful believers are never submitted literally to the flames, but a correlation exists between the soteriological death of unbelievers and the misthological death of unfaithful believers. Alternatively, and more recently, Hollandsworth has posed a very interesting model in which unfaithful believers are hurt by the literal flames of the Lake of Fire at the Bema, but they are not liable to literal flames after the fiery judgment at the Bema. I would call this the *quick-dip model*. Hollandsworth and I are agreed as to the eternal nature of rewards and the loss thereof.

In TOD, I refuted the *long-dip model*, which poses that believers will be submitted to literal flames for a thousand years. Hollandsworth’s much more modest proposal, though, is worthy of consideration and seems to be a viable alternative to my own correlative model. Indeed, one might allow that his model and mine are both correct in that **after the quick dip believers are no longer subject to literal fire; nevertheless, the misthological results are eternal and thus correlative**. In fact, in *Part 4* of my *Misthological Models*, I find Hollandsworth’s model very useful in posing a possible solution as to how to reconcile some near death experiences with Free Grace misthology. In any event, appealing to the no-death promise as a supposed proof text in favor of TR actually backfires when Rev 21:4 is studied in its context. If unfaithful believers can be hurt for a 1000 years by the second death, then there is no reason to think that they cannot be hurt in the subsequent eternal state by the Lake of Fire. Indeed, my analysis of Rev 21:4 in RAE gives substantial

⁸ Personal correspondence, 8-2-2015.

⁹ Chitwood, *Mysteries*, 166.

grounds to conclude that Rev 21:4 actually implies that unfaithful believers will be hurt mythologically by the second death during the eternal state. The loss of reward that they experience by the painful Bema flames will be eternal. Subcomers will not burn eternally—neither metaphorically, nor correlatively, nor literally—but they will suffer the results of having been burned, for all eternity. Strike one for the three-pronged TR claim above regarding the three allegedly problematic rewards in Rev 2-3. The promise of not being hurt by the second death poses no problem for ER.

No Rod of Iron

Chitwood also overstates the strength of his argument in relation to the rod of iron. Those who hold to the ER ideology acknowledge that ruling with an iron rod is no longer necessary in the eternal state. However, this acknowledgement poses no problem for the ER model, as stated in TOD:

In conclusion, procreation will continue so that mankind can inhabit and rule the whole creation. No rulership can exist without subjects to be ruled. A distinction must be made between the nations and those who rule over them in the millennial age (Rev 2:26). This distinction extends into the eternal age. Yet **the transition from one age to the other will bring a change**. Whereas the millennial nations will be composed of men and women in *sinful* fleshly bodies who reproduce offspring with sin natures, the eternal nations will be composed of men and women in *sinless* flesh and blood bodies who likewise reproduce sinless offspring. **Correspondingly, a change in the nature of the rule will occur that reflects the change in the nature of the subjects. Ruling with a rod of iron and forcing submission will no longer be necessary (Rev 2:26[27]). In eternity their subjects will submit joyfully to the serving rulership of their rulers.**

The obvious conclusion from the ER perspective is that rulership will continue to be a reward in the eternal state, but the nature of that rulership will change in that it will no longer be carried out with a rod of iron because the nature of the subjects will have changed, not because the rulership has ceased to be a reward. Chitwood is thinking much too simplistically when he assumes that the transition necessarily spells an end to the mythological nature of the rulership just because ruling with a rod of iron is no longer necessary. Moreover, in PJ's critical remark of my model, in which he states that ER advocates such as myself are teaching that *things continue in the same way in the eternal state*, he has misstated the ER position. Three times in the above quote I said that there would be a *change!* PJ speaks falsely when he mischaracterizes ER as posing that there is no change between the nature of the rulership as expressed in Rev 2-3 versus Rev 21-22. Both ER and TR acknowledge that a change takes place. By not owning up to this fact, PJ has failed to pose a valid objection to the ER model. Strike two for the three-pronged TR claim above. The fact that overcomers will not rule with a rod of iron in the eternal state poses no problem for the ER perspective.

No Separate Throne for Christ

Chitwood's appeal to Rev 3:21 as proof that millennial rewards are not eternal is the weakest of his three arguments. Christ promises: "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." Apparently, for some seemingly unexplained reason, Chitwood seems to think that Christ's not having a separate throne in the eternal state means that overcomers will not have a mythological throne in the eternal state. But why? Will Christ no longer deserve to rule in the eternal state by virtue of His having overcome? Perish the thought! But if Christ still deserves to rule in an expanded capacity in the eternal state by virtue of having overcome, then why not conclude that overcomers will also? Chitwood states:

The rule of Christ itself during the eternal ages will no longer be limited to the earth. Rather, it will extend beyond the earth (the new earth), *out into the universe*.

Christ will be seated upon a throne from which there will be an administration of power and authority *throughout the universe* — "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1, 3); and the Christians' continuing rule "with Christ" (Rev. 22:5) would have to be of a like nature, for the power will no longer emanate from *Christ's throne*, but from *the throne of God and of the Lamb*. In this respect, the rule by Christ and His co-heirs *over the earth* during the Millennium can only be extended to a rule *over worlds throughout the universe* following the Millennium.¹⁰ (Emphasis his.)

As argued in TOD, I am in complete agreement that our mythological rulership will expand throughout the universe. So how is this a problem for the ER position? Chitwood continues:

And the position which man (all of saved mankind) will occupy in this universal rule is *unrevealed*,

¹⁰ Chitwood, *Time*, 440.

though, as previously seen, it appears clear that man's rule in that day will be *universal* since power will emanate from "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Possibly this rule will have to do with, or include, positions under God over provincial rulers (angels) in the multiplied billions of provinces scattered throughout the multiplied billions of galaxies comprising the physical universe. But, again, we're not told. This is something yet to be revealed.¹¹ (Emphasis his.)

Chitwood's argument, as he has stated it in connection with Christ's extended rulership, which is affirmed by Revelation itself, fails to show why this transition in rulership poses a problem for the ER position. Overcomers will eventually rule the entire universe. This proposition poses no problem for ER.¹² If this is what Chitwood means by *universal*, then I am in complete agreement. On the other hand, he might mean that it will be *universal* in the sense that *all men will rule*.

Presumably, the latter is what Chitwood intends, judging from what he said in *Mysteries*: "Christ and His co-heirs, beyond the Millennium, will no longer rule over the nations, as this rule is pictured in Rev. 2:26, 27. **Rather, the Gentiles comprising these nations will be brought into positions of rulership themselves with Christ and His co-heirs, as this rule extends beyond the earth, out into the universe (Rev. 22:2, 5).**"¹³ My response is, "Prove it! Don't merely assert it!"

I deal with Rev 22:2,5 in detail in RAE and demonstrate why these verses should be taken as affirming misthological rulership in the eternal state, limited to the faithful. Chitwood provides mere assertion; I provide demonstration. Even apart from my arguments therein, however, it suffices for present purposes to note that when we get beyond the millennial kingdom in Rev 20 to the end of the book in Rev 21-22, the distinction between kings and subjugated nations still persists: "And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it" (Rev 21:24). The kings rule the nations. The nations are not coequal with the kings. The nations are not the rulers. Chitwood's errors are manifest. Strike three for his three-pronged TR claim above. The fact that Christ will experience some transition in the form of His rulership poses no problem for ER posing that overcomers will experience a similar misthological transition.

In conclusion, the three alleged proof texts from Rev 2-3, which purportedly prove that rewards are only millennial in scope when compared to the eternal state, actually prove that rewards are eternal when interpreted properly in the context of the eternal state. This cross examination of the TR appeal to three of these promises in Rev 2-3, as supposedly proving that rewards are only millennial, has demonstrated the superficiality of the TR claim.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., 440-441.

¹² Indeed, the proposition that rulership will expand throughout the universe is highly suggestive that human procreation will continue throughout the eternal state as well. Those believers who live until the end of the millennial kingdom will be able to enter the eternal state in physical, albeit sinless, bodies and procreate. Consequently death at the cellular level will continue in this case in the eternal state. See RAE for proof.

¹³ Chitwood, *Mysteries*, 166.

¹⁴ As I was wrapping up this discussion, I received an email from another reader sharing objection raised by someone in PJ's church. (Personal correspondence, 8-5-2015.) Like PJ, this objector seems to be very ignorant of the arguments used in my ER position. Judging from their objections, apparently neither objector has read either my book or my article dealing with this topic. PJ is aware of the article at least. But if he has read it, then it is strange that his comments are so superficial. In any case, they are both smugly confident that I must be completely wrong. Granted, I am just as confident that they are wrong. But my confidence is due, in considerable part, to the fact that I have interacted with their TR arguments and demonstrated the shortcomings of their arguments. Is it too much that I ask that they do the same for ER arguments? At any rate, I will respond briefly to this second objector in this footnote as a *post script* and therefore use *PS* as her alias.

Both PJ and PS cite Mt 12:32 as allegedly proving their position. In doing so, they are grasping at straws. For example, PS says, "**Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man...it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.**" I figured there must be a *significant* reason for Jesus not to mention the eternal ages, figuring that their sin *would be* forgiven in the eternal ages" (emphases hers). Really? This is an argument from silence; such arguments are notoriously weak. PS reasons that because Jesus did not say that such sins would remain unforgiven in subsequent ages, they must not be. With this logic one could just as well reason, fallaciously, that since Paul says in 1Cor 9:25 that Jesus will reign until He puts all things beneath His feet and does not mention that Christ will reign thereafter, Christ must not reign in the eternal state! Yet even TR advocates are forced to acknowledge that Christ rules in the eternal state. One cannot assume that unforgiven sins will cease to be unforgiven any more than one can assume Christ will cease to rule at the end of the allotted time. Then again, I could pose, with equal ease, that Christ is referring to the kingdom age, thus eternity, not the mere millennial age, when

Conclusion

Let us conclude by taking PJ's requested two or three minutes to compare the rewards mentioned in Rev 2-3 with the eternal state in Rev 21-22 by surveying the following list of rewards from those initial chapters:

1. Eating of the tree of life
2. Having the crown of life
3. Not being hurt by the second death
4. Eating hidden manna
5. Having a white stone
6. Having a new name written on the stone
7. Having authority over the nations
8. Ruling them with a rod of iron
9. Having the morning star
10. Walking with Christ in white
11. Being clothed in white garments
12. Not having one's name erased from the Book of Life
13. Having one's name confessed
14. Keeping one's crown
15. Being made a pillar in the temple of God
16. Not going out from it anymore
17. Having God's name written on you
18. Having the name of New Jerusalem written on you
19. Having Christ's new name written on you
20. Sitting with Christ on His throne

The suggested 2-3 minute look at this list would indicate that these rewards are eternal, not millennial only. We will not even be informed of a millennial limitation until ch. 20. This twenty-item list comes much earlier, in chs. 2-3. Even then, when we get beyond the millennial kingdom in ch. 20 to the end of the book in chs. 21-22, we find that the tree is still a reward (Rev 22:14,19) and that the distinctions between kings and subjected nations persist (Rev 21:24). Casting crowns before Jesus' feet in Rev 4:10 does not prove that rewards only last during the tribulation. Thus one cannot assume that the promised crown in the list is a temporary reward. So, at the very least, one should be cautious to assume that any of these rewards actually terminate and only last during the millennium. Rewards are still limited to overcomers in the eternal state (Rev 21:7), just as they were limited to overcomers throughout the list in Rev 2-3. Having washed robes, and thus by implication white garments, is still a misthological theme in the eternal state (Rev 22:14). Being a part of Christ's Bride is still a reward (cp. Rev 3:20; 19:7; 21:2).¹⁵

Summary

In summary, only 1 of these 20 rewards might seem, with nothing more than a superficial look, to suggest a limited duration perhaps, namely, the iron rule. But that transition is much better explained by posing that the nations become willing subjects after the 1000 years, not by posing that the nations become rulers after a 1000 years. After all, as already

He says that their sins would remain unforgiven.

In a further grasping-at-straws technique, PS speculates as to how I might interpret the passage concerning the rich young ruler, and she concludes that the passage is referring to life versus death exclusively in the millennial age, not in the eternal state or both. I disagree. But that point aside, PS concludes: "If it is either of the last two (which the last one would seem to be the logical conclusion to what Marty is teaching) then there is a major problem with his teaching, because then he has just lumped the free gift of eternal life and the reward together, totally messing up the doctrine of both!" Nonsense. Frankly, her argument is nothing more than a speculative attempt to guess how I might interpret this passage compiled with an erroneous conclusion based on pure speculation. That point also aside, PS obviously does not understand the options that she herself has posed. One must be able to distinguish a gift from a reward, not only for the eternal ages, but for the coming age! My model does just that in that I show that the same distinction that exists soteriologically and misthologically between a gift and a reward during the 1000 years will exist thereafter. Therefore, rewards are eternal. **PS is the one who cannot tell the difference between a gift and a reward when she poses that the reward becomes a gift after a 1000 years!**

¹⁵ Rev 3:20 is part of the dinner leading to the betrothal contract in which the bride promises to keep herself pure.

noted, the distinction between rulers and those ruled will continue in the eternal state (cp. Rev 21:24).

As to not being hurt by the second death, overcomers are not hurt by the second death during the millennial kingdom nor during the eternal state. This reward is not limited to a 1000 years. There is no reason to think, upon the requested simple reading of the text in chs 2-3, that John is using this promise, nor any of these promises for that matter, to limit rewards to 1000 years.

Granted, Dillow and Chitwood have used a statement that comes much later in the book, in Rev 21:4, to argue that there is no death of any type in the eternal state. Chitwood then concludes that rewards cease in the eternal state. He has an interesting argument, but it is in no way derived from a simple reading of chs. 2-3. Rather it is a sophisticated argument, as proven by the fact that Dillow did not pick up on it and even Chitwood himself did not in *Time of the End*.¹⁶ Notwithstanding, it is an interesting argument, and I have refuted their joint no-death-in-the-eternal-state argument in detail in *Rewards are Eternal*.

PJ has spoken falsely. He has misrepresented my position, on the one hand, in saying that I pose no change in the nature of the reward as expressed during the millennial and eternal states, and he has misrepresented the perspicuity of Scripture, on the other hand, by saying that a simple comparison of Rev 2-3 with Rev 21-22 “makes it very obvious” that rewards are limited to the millennial kingdom. What seems very obvious to me is that PJ has not investigated the matter sufficiently so as to be able to speak accurately.

Offer for Dialogue

The next evening, after having finished the above article and submitted a rough draft of it to the two readers involved, who were dealing with PJ and PS respectively, I received a forwarded email from the reader dealing with PJ, in which PJ sincerely apologized for how he had responded to the reader.¹⁷ Hopefully, this means that PJ is no longer setting himself up as some Protestant Pope or mischaracterizing the Berean spirit so as to mean to accept PJ’s interpretation as an infallible decree, immune to biblical cross-examination. Proof is in the pudding; we will see. My views are certainly open to biblical cross-examination. In this spirit, at the suggestion of my reader, I emailed PJ and sent PJ a copy of my book and article (RAE and RAESS respectively).¹⁸ I told him that I would welcome his impute since I find opposition or questions pertaining to my position to be a growing experience and would be happy to address any concerns he may have. As the Scripture says, “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17). As of yet, a week later, I still have had no response from PJ. The ball is in his court. As for myself, I will go ahead and post this article and continue to address issues as they are brought to my attention and therefore add RAESS, the gist of this present article, and other material to a second edition of RAE.

¹⁶ Dillow correctly concludes that rewards are eternal, but he argues, unwittingly, that there is no death of any type in the eternal state. He argues wrongly that no death proves no procreation. He failed to perceive that no death would prove no rewards.

¹⁷ Personal correspondence, 8-7-2015.

¹⁸ Personal correspondence, 8-10-2015.