

Not long ago, I was a key participant in a formal strategy review for a Christian nonprofit. One of the other participants said this: “There’s going to be a day of reckoning for us!” My response? “Well, if the leaders of an organization are astute, they won’t be a victim of a day of reckoning, they’ll be long-term victors!”

Hey, are you even familiar with the term “day of reckoning?” Generally, it means an event of very significant, really scary, final accountability. Here’s a common definition: “the time when past mistakes must be punished or paid for; a testing time when the degree of one’s success or failure will be revealed.”

So, days of reckoning deal with testing, success, and failure...pretty important words for your business or nonprofit, right? But before we jump in to just how “days of reckoning” might apply to your enterprise, let’s take a look at what many would label some of the most important “days of reckoning” in the Bible.

Let’s start by looking at the book of Revelation, chapter 20. Here, the *unbeliever* is held accountable at the Great White Throne Judgment—when the life of everyone who died without knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior is compared to God’s standard of holiness. Go read that Bible passage—it’s very clear that the consequences of this Judgment are not desirable. Yes, *that’s* a day of reckoning!

In contrast, for the *believer* in Christ, the time of the judgment of God is really quite glorious! You see, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, *of course* the works of all those who believe will be judged. But here’s the key: before the believer’s appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ, salvation was already assured by the finished work of Christ on the Cross...by the believer’s faith in Jesus and God’s grace. That’s amazing!

Still, our works as believers do matter a *whole lot* and will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And there are two simple categories of works whose differences are essential to the serious believer.

First, *only those works building on the foundation of Christ* will be rewarded. But this idea of God rewarding our works is viewed as unworthy by some—after all, shouldn’t we work for God just out of pure gratitude? Well, it’s hard to deny that sentiment! Nevertheless, God specifically documents through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:9-14 that works building directly on the foundation of Christ will be rewarded by God! Yes, salvation and entry into God’s Kingdom are indeed free through Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, *hallelujah*, but *above and beyond* Jesus’ extraordinary offering on the Cross for every person who would call upon His name, God will reward that believer for his or her works that help build the Kingdom of God!

Now, all this doesn’t sound like much of a horrible “day of reckoning,” does it? Hey, God’s rewarding of those important works is indeed a cause for rejoicing, not sorrow! And, that’s because Jesus’ death on the Cross was indeed the signature Day of Reckoning for all believers—simply put, Jesus was our *perfect substitute* for paying the price for our sins! He took our Day of Reckoning for us! And, so, at the greatest event in history—the Cross—believers’ ultimate day of reckoning borne by someone else: Jesus, their Savior. Isn’t that beyond remarkable...indescribably profound...and deserving of our deepest gratitude? Jesus’ Day of Reckoning on our behalf. Wow!

But, now, the important second category of works of believers assessed at the Judgment Seat of Christ are those of our works that will absolutely burn up, right then and there! Those works are all those *not* building on the foundation of Christ—you know, our works that are not for God’s glory at all. Here’s a bit of irony. Isn’t that event of “burning up” itself a bit of a day of reckoning, a bitter experience? Well, it could be looked at that way. But I’m not so sure about that. Do you really want to carry all that unproductive, God-judged, useless baggage into heaven—all those pretend-activities that really weren’t about reconciling people to the Father through Christ...or really weren’t about serving others in a way that truly gave God the glory? You know, when it looks like you’re doing good things, but it’s really for your own glory rather than the Kingdom of God? Do you really want to lug that any part of that puny righteousness around with you for eternity? Nope, neither do I! So, while all that burning up may be

perceived as a reckoning, I strongly suspect God actually turns that burning up of our unfruitful works into a time of rejoicing!

Besides, wasn't the sorrow of Christ in bearing all our sins enough of a Day of Reckoning? I would think.

So, now, with that direction from God for every action we are privileged to be sorting out and doing as believers, let's go back to where we started—to the real-world strategy for your business or nonprofit.

“Day of reckoning” is not a phrase we hear all that often in everyday business chatter—but it deserves to be! That's because every organization—every business, every nonprofit, every nation—is facing various days of reckoning, some coming around often in the short-term but surely one killer-day at the end.

So, let's pick it up right there: every organization must vigilantly work as if it's on its way out of business! Why? At least three reasons.

First, short of the Kingdom of God itself, your organization actually *is always* on its way of going out of business—it's only a matter of time before that happens! You know there have been many, many millions of organizations around the world the last several centuries. And the vast majority of them are out of business—they each had a day of reckoning, a judgment forced upon them. Perhaps this was done by hoards of competitors, kind of like modern, vigorous retail competition is in the U.S. Or perhaps this was done by external innovation and technological change that the leaders of the organization chose not to address on a timely basis. Or perhaps this was by a host of factors: poor strategy and weak personnel and bureaucratic process and a lack of worthy successors and whatever else. The various possible causes are many and, remember this, all these causes often work together to spell doom for a business or nonprofit.

Second, extremely shortened time-cycles of change challenging every organization. The digital era has shrunk our world, has often dynamically enabled far better competitors, and has significantly shortened the time-cycles of success and failure. Here's a problem: many leaders still remember the first time they used a cell phone or bought a product on Amazon, but their strategies haven't kept up with these types of radical change. Are they functioning more as a fading dinosaur or a keen-eyed raptor ruling the skies?

Third, the deadly confusion about stewardship vs. leadership that is rampant in many organizations. You see, people are often infatuated with an ideal of being perceived as a leader. But that requires often shallow, short-term wins that buzz the crowd *today!* But stewardship is a longer game: valuing patient long-term, investments over flimsy short-term results. Still, stewardship does require strong survival in the short-term. But how many people at the helm of enterprises today are equipped to juggle both the short-term and the long-term simultaneously? So, many opt for short-term results and glory, then exit and leave the organization in dire shape. No, the truth is that *leadership exists only to serve stewardship*, not vice versa. By the way, you can find a deep teaching on this in the Lasting Greatness series at whitestone.org!

So, now we've come to the overarching point at hand: *reckoning or rejoicing*. Every enterprise risks days of reckoning. But more importantly, every successful organization with a good steward at the helm can skillfully navigate multiple short-term threats—those threats that otherwise could lead to an accelerated day of reckoning. To be sure, that requires an astute stewardship mentality at the helm....to succeed short-term even while continuously laying the bricks for the generations to follow.

That's just like Jesus. The Ultimate Steward. Enduring that sobering Day of Reckoning on our behalf so that eternal abundance for countless, serious believers could follow. And so too with His serious disciples. Faithfully building on the foundation of Christ, bricklayers on the foundation of He Who went before them.

How about *your* organization? Does it have the foundation and bricklaying to avoid its days of reckoning?

A&A: Application & Action

1. Has the Day of Reckoning that Jesus endured on our behalf *fully* changed your daily missional behavior on behalf of God and His Kingdom? Using 1 Corinthians 3:9-14 as your foundation, specifically describe the evidence of your strong bricklaying on the foundations of Christ.

2. Does your enterprise have sufficient internal investments in (a) fresh vision, (b) new technology, and (c) enhanced processes that will defeat or at least lower the risk of upcoming days of reckoning? Be specific.

3. Like the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ, can your enterprise point to a very significant Day of Reckoning that was converted to a Day of Rejoicing for the entire enterprise? If not, why isn't your organization celebrating its key victories? Describe how your current role helps your organization convert looming days of reckoning into victorious days of rejoicing.