

“What'd you do after that?” Those are among the most important words you will likely ever hear from Christ. *What'd you do after that?* Well, now, I'm not sure those are the *exact* words Christ will use, but I know that's going to be the gist of the meeting. And for Christians, that's going to be the best, most just meeting ever! But a host of others—yes, unbelievers—will never even get to have that particular meeting.

So, let's back up a bit here, and start by looking at the “that” in “What'd you do after that?” And the word “that” is the moment that you first believed in Christ. That's the watershed moment for every Christian, because belief in Christ marked the point you became a citizen of the Kingdom of God! (Colossians 1:13)

Now, I know those are fightin' words for some people very serious about their religion, because it sounds so formulaic, so simplistic, so “evangelical-y.” Perhaps you can't remember a time in your entire life that you *didn't* believe in Christ and Him crucified. That's awesome, what a heritage...what's important here is that you literally do believe and are therefore truly born again as a new creature in Christ. Well, there I go again, using words that might actually insult you. Well, that would tend to make me cringe just a bit—no offense is intended to you—but, boldly, here's what John 3:3 (ESV) says, “Jesus answered [Nicodemus], “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

And just what is the timetable of that Kingdom? Well, it was urgent at the time of Christ! Mark 1:15 reports that Jesus went into Galilee after John the Baptist was arrested and said this: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Not long thereafter came the death and Resurrection of Christ, and much of the world ultimately changed its calendar to BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini...which means, “in the year of our Lord”). You know, like maybe you were born in AD 1990? Politically, this has gotten sticky in recent decades, especially among scholars and secularists, so many now say BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era) instead. The upshot of these battles? Believers think that history fundamentally changed with the Advent, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the calendar used in much of the world was changed to reflect that. But we should say this: when each person dies, that person will discover whose calendar designation is most representative of reality!

So, maybe you were born in, say, AD 1990...but when were you *born again*? Even if you can't name a totally specific date, that's certainly OK...but somewhere along the line you simply must believe in Christ and Him crucified! Poppycock, you say, that's not what my tradition, my pastor, my denomination teaches. Well, let's summarize *what approaches, Biblically, will not work to get you to heaven*. How about a list?

- Your belief in a different religion than Biblical Christianity, like Buddhism or Islam or Mormonism
- Your diligent trying to follow the Law of Moses—all the rules—including the 10 Commandments
- Your good works
- Your family's multi-generational commitment to the Christian religion
- Your church membership or denominational affiliation
- Your church's traditions that work to actually override Bible truth

In clear contradiction to these commonly held beliefs, here's what Ephesians 2:8-9 powerfully says: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” So, you and I must rely on God's gift of grace through Christ by exercising the faith given to each of us by God—in other words, we must choose to respond to what Jesus did for each of us on the Cross. Simple. Now, that answers *this* question: “what'd you do *before* that?” *Before that* means that faith in Christ is the *only* path of justification before God! So, we see the only answer that will count is this: “I believed in Christ and Him crucified...the gospel of the Kingdom of God!” If this is a problem for you, I get it! Cultural forces and church traditions and family history and self-justification are powerful forces that work relentlessly to justify themselves as the correct path to God—I myself pretty much defaulted to such approaches for years, well into early adulthood. So have many millions of others. But, by definition, these approaches conflict and cannot all be correct! And sincere

popularity doesn't make these approaches effectual in God's eyes...and, if you think they should, then you very much need to ponder this truth: *faith in Christ alone* stands unbridgeably apart from every other approach, and your eternal destiny is at stake. If you choose otherwise—well, choices have consequences!

After that moment of response, *your* response to believe in Christ, we get to the question we started with—what'd you do *after* that? You know, *what'd you do after that* faith response? The reasons why this is so important? First, because we're rightly compelled to find suitable ways to express our deep gratitude to God. And, second, because you will find Jesus ultimately has a very important meeting with each believer—it's known as the Judgment Seat of Christ. And, contrary to the opinion of many people that it will be a really bad experience, it should be a glorious event! Here's Paul writing in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15.

“For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” Yes, out of gratitude to God, we work to build *rightly!*

Indeed, this passage features the prescribed key focus of *what'd you do after that?* We have work to do, work that itself doesn't bring salvation—yes, we've already been saved when we believe! But after that saving belief in Christ, our works that are *wrongly* built on the foundation of Christ will be assessed justly by Jesus and will mercifully burn. Happily, that means we won't have to carry a bag full of our bad life-priorities around heaven for eternity! God's mercy is so lavish that He will burn up our mistaken priorities!

But look! Where we have *effectively* built on the foundation of Christ, *we will receive rewards!* Think of it: beyond salvation, beyond eternal life, beyond eternal fellowship with God, our clear work for Christ during our dual-citizenship time on earth is going to be rewarded, over and above all those benefits based on grace alone! So, works are not bad at all—if they are not wrongly expected to save us and *if* they are for God's glory and not our own! Examples? Proclaiming the gospel! Judiciously witnessing! Praising God!

This is why I speak to college students of their full-time ministry being the goal of the Christian life, whether they are engineers or nurses or accountants or pastors. Yes, salvation, eternal life, and fellowship with God now and forever are truly shocking, unparalleled benefits of our response to the Cross. But, amazingly, Christ offers even more: rewards for properly-focused work building rightly on His foundation!

But there is that fly in the ointment, spoiling it in a way that can lead to that burning at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Sadly, much of what Christians do is deathly-silent service...great work, perhaps...but efforts that ultimately glorify the worker, crowding out Jesus. To be blunt, much of what passes in many Christians' minds as work for Jesus appears to astute observers as the same as worldly work done by, say, a nice secularist at the United Nations or the World Health Organization. Deeds ultimately unaccompanied by verbal witness for Christ—well, is that *effectively* building on Christ's foundation? In Romans 15:18, Paul speaks of “what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed!”

Here's the deal: by *clearly* building on Christ's foundation, *you actually free up Jesus to justly reward you in heaven!* Yes, you responded to the Cross! But for that ultimate, rewards-bestowing meeting with Jesus—*what'd you do after that?* Exciting, isn't it?!

A&A: Application & Action

1. Are you born again...are you a grateful believer in Christ and Him crucified? Well, then, there is no condemnation in Christ, including what you may or may not have been doing well for Christ since your salvation. Whether alone or in a group, just take a few moments and praise God, testifying as to His goodness and what He has done in your life!
2. While there is no condemnation in Christ, He will reward each of us for how we have built on the foundation given us and will burn up poor priorities. How do you specifically assess your upcoming activities over the next year as to meeting the standard of priorities that would be rewarded by Christ at the Judgment Seat? Over the next ten years?
3. Let's apply this to our everyday workplace. Common grace goes a very long way in warmly welcoming a new person into your organization. But measuring how well that person (and every other person) builds on your workplace's good foundations is key to the long-term health and effective stewardship of your workplace organization. How well does your workplace start with grace but then reward "good building" and "burn up" bad work at key measuring points? How about your church?