Imagine that someone offered for you to get in on the ground floor of a totally amazing opportunity. …Yeah, an opportunity unparalleled in its claims and promises and expectations, both for the front-end acceptance of the offer and the opportunities to participate in the remarkable building of the organization or project that follows.

Now you may be thinking something like this: maybe he's talking about something like getting in on buying Amazon stock in the early years…or maybe he's talking about buying real estate for a low price in the middle of a city that explodes in growth and prosperity.

The first instinct of many people when thinking about this type of thing is to look for a "sure thing" like Amazon stock or beachfront property in Hawaii…that's right, to invest in those types of opportunity almost totally assured of multiplication beyond our wildest dreams.

But you know and I know and everyone who wasn't born yesterday knows that you have to be in the right time and place with all the necessary resources at hand in order for this kind of dream to come true.

On top of that, there are always risks that are seemingly unclear at the front end—and in fact, that is very often true! Choices come with a certain measure of risk due to the actions taken—or inactions not! And quantifying that risk can be very tricky…yes, is that risk really high or just a bit higher than is comfortable?

But what happens when a truly outstanding offer *does* come along to experience the proverbial dream of a lifetime…and the offer is extended to someone who doesn't have the discernment or the foresight to embrace the perceived risk? Well, that happens all the time—and has been for a couple of thousand years!

What we're talking about here is accepting God's offer of amazing, unparalleled benefits and new opportunities that come with believing in Christ and Him crucified unto salvation and eternal life! Obviously, this isn't an ordinary offer like choosing a great meal from a restaurant menu…and it's not even an amazing offer to buy stock in Amazon in 1997 when the public could first buy stock in the company.

No, what we're talking about here is *God's perfect offer*, the sacrificial offering of Christ on the Cross on behalf of all who call upon His name—yes, a *perfect* offering that literally yields a multitude of benefits not found elsewhere in all history. And just like any good lawyer would tell you, an offer is only good for those who respond and accept it! Of course, this utterly unique offer is the gospel that's available to every person around the world, yes, the good news of Christ! And we know from the Bible that God our Savior's desire is that all people be saved (1 Timothy 2:4 ESV)!

Now, this utterly unique offering of the Son by the Father literally redefined risk in astounding ways! Have you thought about the risks that God changed for each person by virtue of Christ's death and Resurrection? Well now, there are all kinds of risk that are radically altered by the Cross, huge risks that are very significant to every person. But today, here, let's really hone in to the two overarching issues.

For the first time ever, the Cross and its perfect justice and atonement definitively addressed the risk of destiny for each and every person: *where will I go after I die.* You see, God is just, so each and every sin will be paid for justly: unbelievers will pay for *their* sins…but believers' sins *are fully paid for by Christ*—and the destiny of those believers is eternal life.

John 3:16-17 tells us and reminds us of this truth clearly: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Hey, the religious systems like Buddhism or Islam that work to compete with the Cross simply do not and cannot promise the destiny of all humanity with the just and moral clarity that handles crisp consequences for sin, whether that of unbelievers or believers, *hallelujah!* But it's deeper than that. From Eden until now, humanity was built for fellowship with the Creator. And even the most dense pagan realizes that the person who just died has departed from the lifeless physical body. But where does the human spirit go?

For Christians, it's seamless, as Paul taught the believers at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 5:8: *absent from the body, present with the Lord*.

Yes, Christ and the Cross reconciled us to His Father! That's the stunning reality of reconciliation to the Father: yes, through Christ, relationship is established with God now and forever. *Listen, each and every person's overarching risk is <u>not</u> accepting God's offer of salvation, eternal life, and fellowship with God!*

But fear not, the invitation is open to all who seek God! Indeed, this offer to all is the great leveler for all humanity…to the rich and to the poor…to the Jew and to the Gentile…to the man and to the woman!

All that is beyond amazing, isn't it? But God then has another risk for those who believe in Christ. And we have that risk because God planned rewards for those who build on the foundation of Christ! *What??...you might be saying.* Well, let's back up: we must first remember that the only way someone gets rewards is for action taken with risk involved. You see, the word "reward" in Webster's definition means "something given in return for deeds, service, or attainment, encompassing recompense, a prize, or a bonus…"

Wait just a minute…*again!* You mean to say that God gives rewards for all those actions by saved believers building on the foundation of Christ? That's right, He does—the Apostle Paul wrote that promise very clearly in 1 Corinthians 3:9-16! And He also burns up all those actions taken by saved believers that are not built on the foundation of Christ. This judgment—for good or for ill—will happen for every believer!

And let's just take a moment and reflect that this key verse says *Christ*…which means "the Anointed One, the Messiah," yes, specifically the Savior of the world. So, believers are to work to build on the foundation of what the Messiah specifically did on the Cross—and surely that means for believers to go forth proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples around the world, just as Jesus the Christ Himself instructed all of His disciples, then and now…that's found in Matthew 28:18-20!

So…*just what is the real risk with Christ?* Well, even though all true born-again believers are saved, the risk for every believer is still in *not doing things during his or her new life in Christ that last!* That's right, every believer's actions and deeds will be measured by Jesus Christ—and those built on the Christ's foundation will be rewarded while those deeds and actions not built on His foundation will be burned up.

Hmmm, you might be thinking, this sounds like "works, not grace." Well, this is what's true: born again believers are saved only by grace—but believers' works will still indeed be judged and those works found building on Christ's foundation will be rewarded! *The risk for believers then, is not doing things that last!*

Hey, surely you've heard of the acronym FOMO…the fear of missing out? Well, that acronym rose to high use the past several years and is now embedded in many an everyday conversation. Let's face it, missing out on exciting and clearly profitable opportunities can and often does create that certain sickness of heart. But the gospel's good news is that "God our Savior desires all people to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4), and He has revealed Himself to all creation through the natural world (Romans 1).

So, in God's economy, there are two very key risks. First is the risk of not taking the offer of salvation and eternal life planned from the foundation of the world and manifested at the Cross. Second is the risk for the believer to not build on the foundation of Christ, to not do things that last—and that is first and foremost addressed by proclaiming Christ and making disciples of others locally and around the world.

In this way, the planned, beautiful dimension in God's economy is this: believers will get rewarded for helping others respond in belief to the foundational risk of not having eternal life and fellowship with God! So, here's the thing: God's perfect offer redefines the risk for everyone—first in the response to the Cross (or the lack thereof)…then, the believer's response (or lack thereof) in building on the foundation of Christ!

And it's all glorious upside for the individuals willing to respond to the will of God, first in their salvation opportunity…then in helping to build the Kingdom itself on the foundations of Christ! So, Amazon stock in 1997? Good. Hawaii beachfront property? Yay! *But salvation, then God's rewards after that? Stunning!*

A&A: Application & Action

1. Are you truly born again from above, as Jesus instructed Nicodemus (John 3)? Your eternal destiny depends on your answer to that question. Discuss.

2. If you are a believer in Christ, are you truly building on the foundation of Christ, the Messiah, the Savior? Discuss.

3. When inspecting their fruits, do you believe the average Christian in a place like America has managed risk such that they will be rewarded for "building on the foundation of Christ?" Discuss.