

# Heaven

I'd like to take some time to explore what the Bible has to say about Heaven. My goal is to give people a better idea of what Heaven is like and put to rest some common misconceptions. My plan is to approach the subject one passage at a time and explore what each one has to say.

## **The Criminal on the Cross**

When Jesus was crucified He had a short conversation with someone else who was also being crucified – a conversation that tells us something interesting about Heaven. The passage can be found in Luke:

**Luke 23:39-43:** “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Did you catch the significance of what Jesus said? He knew that all three of them were going to die that day, and they did. However, Jesus promised the repentant criminal that he would be in Paradise with Jesus *that very day!* This means that when people die they don't just “sleep” until Judgment Day – they *immediately* go to either Heaven or Hell. In the case of this

criminal it was straight to Heaven; in the case of the unnamed rich man (who we'll discuss in the next section) it was straight to a place of fire and torment.

It's also important to realize that this man went straight to Heaven, *not* to Purgatory! The concept of Purgatory is highly unbiblical for a great many reasons. It's significant that Jesus didn't say "Today you'll go to Purgatory and spend years there suffering for your sins, but eventually you'll make it to Paradise." According to the Bible there are only two options: when people die they go to Heaven or to Hell.

### **The Rich Man and Lazarus**

In Luke 16 the Lord Jesus Christ tells us the story of the rich man and Lazarus. This story was *not* given as a parable. Jesus didn't start out by saying "The kingdom of Heaven is like..." Instead He simply said that there was once a rich man and a beggar and then told us what happened to each of them. This was presented as *history* and should be interpreted as such.

Let's take a look at the passage and see what it has to say:

**Luke 16:19-23:** "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

There are a few interesting things we can learn from this

passage. First, both people went somewhere *as soon as they died*. Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom and the rich man found himself in Hell. Once again we see that the notion of "soul sleep" is incorrect! As soon as these people died they were sent to either a place of rest or a place of torment.

It's also interesting that the beggar was *carried by angels*. I don't know if this happens every time a righteous person dies, but it did happen this time. Finally, notice that the rich man immediately recognized Abraham even though he never met him during his life. It's possible that in the life to come you know everyone and everyone knows you.

The rich man wasn't happy about being in Hell. He was experiencing a great deal of torment:

**Luke 16:24:** "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

The rich man must have had a body of some sort because he could feel pain, he had a tongue, and he was thirsty. The flame was tormenting him and he wanted something cool to ease his pain. There are some people who teach that the reason Hell is terrible is because the people there are separated from God. However, this man wasn't suffering from "separation from God"! Instead he was hot and thirsty and desperate for something to ease his *physical* suffering. He wasn't a disembodied spirit but clearly had a body that was able to receive nourishment! Abraham must have had a body as well because the rich man begged him to dip his finger in water. This means that Abraham had fingers, which means the body we will have between our death and our resurrection is similar to the one we have now.

Moreover, the rich man *recognized* both Abraham and Lazarus. Some people teach that when you die you'll no longer remember your life or recognize anyone that once knew.

However, the rich man clearly recognized the beggar who used to lay at his gate. In fact, even Abraham was aware of their history, which we see in the next verse:

**Luke 16:25:** “But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

Here Abraham makes another interesting point. Both Abraham and the rich man *remembered the rich man's life on Earth*. Some people believe that when you die you'll no longer remember what you did on Earth, but that's clearly *not* the case! Abraham reminded the rich man that when he was still alive he had a good life. His past hadn't disappeared.

What's especially interesting is that *Abraham* remembered the life of the rich man, even though the rich man never met Abraham! This may mean that Abraham watched the rich man while he was still alive, or that in the life to come everyone knows the life history of everyone else.

The passage goes on:

**Luke 16:26:** “And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”

This is another interesting point. There will be no mercy missions to ease the pain of those who are suffering Hell. Those who are in one place can't pass over to the other place. The righteous saints who are rejoicing in God's kingdom have no fear of ever finding themselves in Hell. There's no road that can take them there because an impassable gulf separates the two places!

Since no one can help the rich man, he asked Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers:

**Luke 16:27-28:** “Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

This brings up another interesting point. The rich man was aware of what was going on back home! Jesus doesn't tell us how he knew, but the rich man recognized that his brothers were still alive and were also in danger of Hell. At this point he realized he made a terrible mistake and it was too late for him to be saved, and he wanted to rescue his brothers. (If people in Hell are aware of what's happening on Earth, isn't it also possible that people in Heaven have that same awareness?)

There are three verses left:

**Luke 16:29-31:** “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

This is the end of the story.

The rich man wanted someone to rise from the dead and warn people about Hell. Abraham said that if people won't listen to Moses and the prophets then they won't listen to a resurrected person either.

Was there anyone who rose from the dead and then appeared to people and talked to them? Yes there was – the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham was correct: even though Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to many people, there are still multitudes who reject His testimony.

## **The Unrighteous Steward**

This unusual story tells us about a person who was falsely accused of being wasteful. The Lord used this story to point out that the wicked are sometimes wiser than the saints because the wicked are smart enough to use their money to win friends, while the saved fail to use their resources to build relationships which will last throughout eternity.

We can find this story in the book of Luke:

**Luke 16:1-9:** “And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, how much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when

ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

This story may also be a true historical account, because it doesn't begin with the phrase “The kingdom of Heaven is like...”. In this story a servant is accused of being wasteful. As a result of this accusation the servant's master told him that he was going to be fired. The steward realized that this meant he would have no way to support himself. He came up with a brilliant idea: he went to each person who owed his master money and canceled part of their debt. This had two benefits: it made it easier for them to repay the debt and ensured that his master would at least get a partial payment, and it made the debtors grateful and willing to help the steward in return.

The lesson that Christ draws from this is interesting. He said that His followers should use their worldly resources to build relationships and help others so that when they die they'll be received “into everlasting habitations”. This means that when a person dies and goes to Heaven, the people they helped will *remember* them and open their homes to them! They'll be grateful and will reward the giver. What was given in this life will be repaid in the next on a much grander scale.

As we can see, people have homes in Heaven, they remember what happened to them during their life in this world, and the relationships they had on Earth continue in Heaven. Jesus wants us to take advantage of these facts and build relationships here so that we'll be rewarded in Heaven. The people you helped in this life will reward you in the next.

## **The Martyrs**

Revelation chapter 6 tells us about a group of martyrs in Heaven. What's interesting about this is what the martyrs are doing. They give us a valuable insight about what life is like in Heaven:

**Revelation 6:9-11:** “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

This passage reveals something amazing about Heaven that's often overlooked. First of all, we've already established that when people die they immediately go to either Heaven or Hell. Because of this there's no reason to think that these martyrs are somehow figurative. These are real people who were executed for their faith in Jesus Christ, and they're now in Heaven crying out to God.

What some people miss is what the martyrs are doing. These individuals, who are in Heaven with the Lord, are crying out for *vengeance!* They're not happy, blissful souls without a care in the world. They remember their lives on Earth and know that they were unjustly murdered, and they're asking God to do something about it. They *still care* about what happened to them and they know that they haven't been avenged. They haven't simply “moved on” and gotten over it. This is more evidence that after people die they still know what's going on in this world – and those who were mistreated desire justice *even after they're dead.*

The Lord's response is interesting: He gave them white robes and told them they need to wait a little longer. He didn't refuse their request or rebuke them for it. Instead He promised to grant it in a little while, after even more people were martyred.



That's when He would pour out His wrath upon the world and judge it for its wickedness.

## **Time**

Some people say that time doesn't pass in Heaven. However, Revelation says otherwise:

**Revelation 8:1:** “And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”

Here we see that there was silence in Heaven for thirty minutes. Thirty minutes is an interval of *time*. If there was no time in Heaven then there couldn't be any thirty-minute periods! In fact there wouldn't be any time periods at all, so if there are time periods in Heaven then *there must be time*.

In fact, if *anything* is happening in Heaven then there must be time. Stop and think about it: how can one event happen and then something else happen next if there's no such thing as time? Time is the distance between events. The idea of time not existing doesn't make any sense. If there was no such thing as time then nothing could *ever* happen!

So where does this idea come from? The phrase “time shall be no more” is found in one passage in the Bible. That passage is this one:

**Revelation 10:5-7:** “And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound,

the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

This passage is *not* teaching that one day time itself will come to an end. That idea makes no sense and contradicts what Revelation said just two chapters earlier. What this passage is saying is that one day an angel will say that “the mystery of God” would be finished. The phrase “there should be time no longer” means the same thing as “it's run out of time” or “there's no time left”. All the angel is saying is that one day the mystery will finally be finished because the time when it was being kept hidden will be over.

## **Animals**

One common question is whether animals go to Heaven when they die. The Bible doesn't directly answer this question. It's clear that God cares about animals because when He destroyed the world in the Flood He had Noah create an Ark so the animal kingdom could be saved (Genesis 6:19-20). Jesus told us that God knows every sparrow that falls (Matthew 10:29), and in Job the Lord took great pride in telling Job about some of the animals He had created (Job 39). Animals are definitely on God's mind, but the Bible doesn't tell us what happens to them.

However, Ecclesiastes does say something interesting. In Chapter 3 Solomon said this:

**Ecclesiastes 3:18-21:** “I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one

place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"

Verse 21 is interesting. It seems to say that something lives on after an animal dies. Both people and animals have a spirit which lives on after death! Now, the spirit of the animal doesn't seem to go to the same place as the spirit of people, but something *does* happen to it. I realize this isn't conclusive but it's interesting.

Another point to consider is that God definitely has the power to bring animals to Heaven. Animals have never sinned so they wouldn't be disqualified from being in the presence of God. There's certainly no reason to believe that animals go to Hell because Hell is reserved for sinners and animals can't sin.

## **The End of the Earth**

When the Lord destroyed the world in the great Flood back in Noah's day He promised that He would never again destroy the entire planet with a Flood. However, He *didn't* promise to never again destroy the world – and one day the world will be destroyed a second time. We can find this taught in 2 Peter:

**2 Peter 3:10-13:** “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens

being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

In this passage we're told that one day the Lord will destroy the Earth and *everything in it* with fire. Everything that this planet contains will be destroyed! The elements themselves will melt and the very heavens will be on fire. All of the works that are in it – both great and small – will be destroyed. Nothing that we see today will survive! Those who repented of their sins and put their faith in Christ will live forever and never die, but all of their possessions in this world will be lost. Nothing on this planet will last forever.

However, that will *not* be the end. After this happens the Lord has promised to create a new heaven and a new earth (which we'll talk about a bit later). Of particular interest is the word that's translated “new”. It doesn't mean new in the sense of a second one, but new in the sense of taking something and restoring it to its original condition – in other words, making it new again. The Lord isn't done with this planet! He will indeed destroy it with fire, but then He will remake it to the way it was before sin entered in and brought a curse upon it. This new world won't be evil but will be filled with righteousness and peace. The old world that's filled with suffering and pain and death will be gone forever.

## **The Great White Throne Judgment**

The Bible tells us that at the end of this age there will be a judgment where people will stand before the throne of God and be judged. This takes place after the Millennial Kingdom and is discussed in Revelation 20:

**Revelation 20:11-15:** “And I saw a great white

throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

In this judgment all of the dead are brought before God. No one is excluded. Hell itself is emptied of all the souls it contains.

It's critical to understand that the people who will be judged here are *the dead*. The reason this matters is because this judgment takes place in the second half of Revelation 20. In the first half of this chapter the Lord returned to Earth and raised all of the *righteous* back to life, and together they lived and reigned for a thousand years. This judgment takes place *after* that! This means the only people who will still be dead at this time are all of the wicked who have ever lived, and those who died during the Millennial Kingdom. The church won't be included in this judgment because we will be raised to life at the rapture. Likewise, the tribulation martyrs will be resurrected at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. It's important to understand this so we aren't confused about who this judgment affects.

In this judgment all of the dead are judged. Those whose names are found in the Book of Life are spared and will go on into everlasting life. Those whose names are *not* found in the Book are cast into the Lake of Fire, where they'll be tormented

day and night forever. Death and Hell are also cast into the Lake of Fire. This means that after this judgment Hell is emptied and the wicked spend eternity in the *Lake of Fire*. Nobody will spend eternity in Hell because Hell is just a temporary holding place which will be emptied at this judgment.

## **The New Heaven and Earth**

After this world is destroyed by fire, and after the Great White Throne Judgment, the Lord will create a new heaven and earth. The last two chapters of Revelation have quite a lot to say about this! I'll only quote the first few verses here:

**Revelation 21:1-4:** “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

These verses tell us some important things. First, the current heaven and Earth won't last forever. One day they will both be destroyed. However, after they're destroyed they will be made new again. That's what the word “new” means in verse 1! I believe the Earth is going to be restored to way it was before sin and death entered it.

We've already seen that Hell isn't the final resting place of the wicked. Those who didn't repent and place their faith in Jesus will be brought out of Hell on Judgment Day and cast into the Lake of Fire. Likewise, Heaven isn't the final resting place of the righteous! 2 Peter 3:13 tells us that the saved are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth – and *that's* where the saints will live forever with God.

Take another look at what those verses say. The great city the New Jerusalem will come out of Heaven and *down to Earth!* God then promises to dwell with people *on Earth* and be their God. He will forever banish all death, sorrow, crying, and pain. This new Earth is where God Himself will dwell. It will be both His home and *our* home.

## **The Eternal State**

What will people be doing on this new Earth? Well, for one thing, they'll be living in a city (the New Jerusalem). We're familiar with cities and know that they're filled with all sorts of people and opportunities. It's exciting to speculate about what a race of sinless immortals might spend their time doing – especially with no pain, evil, or death to get in the way! There's nothing inherently evil with science, art, or sports, and there's no reason to believe the New Jerusalem won't use those things (and many more) to bring glory to God. The key difference is that *everything* will be God-centered because we'll finally be free from all sin and will be able to serve God with all of our being.

Revelation chapter 22 does hint at what people will be doing throughout all of the ages to come:

**Revelation 22:3-5:** “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither

light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.”

This passage tells us that “His servants shall serve Him”. Throughout all the ages of eternity His people will continue to serve Him with all of their God-given talents and abilities. Today we struggle to serve God through infirmities and disease and sin and evil. One day we'll serve God with perfect minds, perfect bodies, and in sinless perfection.

But that's not all! There's one other hint mentioned in this passage: we will reign *forever*. The Bible tells us in a number of places that God has made us a race of kings and priests, and throughout eternity we'll reign with God. For example:

**Revelation 1:5-6:** “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

This is found right at the beginning of Revelation. That passage tells us that Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests. The job of kings is *to reign!* This idea of reigning is repeated later on:

**Revelation 5:9-10:** “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”



This is another passage that says the saints of God will reign. Throughout eternity the saints will serve the Lord, and one way we'll do this is by reigning. It's an exciting idea! But what will we be reigning over? The answer to this is hinted at in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 9:6-7:** “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Notice how verse 7 says that the Lord's government will continue to increase *forever*. This implies an eternal state of growth. In what way will it grow? Is it possible that new beings will be added to the Kingdom? It doesn't say – but it *is* clear that stagnation isn't in the picture. God is infinite and will never be exhausted. The full extent of His creativity can't even be imagined! We won't have to worry about getting bored. God's kingdom will continue to increase throughout all the ages of eternity. The Lord has given us the astounding blessing of not only being there to witness it, but being there as a race of *kings*.

## **Treasures and Rewards**

One final issue that must be raised is the issue of rewards. This subject was brought up by Christ Himself in the Sermon on the Mount. The passage is found in Matthew chapter 5:

**Matthew 5:19-21:** “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth

corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Jesus says something very interesting. Notice that He doesn't forbid the accumulation of wealth; instead He commands it! However, there's a twist: He wants us to lay up our treasures *in Heaven*. Jesus points out that if we amass fortunes on Earth we'll eventually lose them because this planet is full of corruption and thieves (plus, one day this world will be destroyed). It's much wiser to lay up our wealth in Heaven because there it can't be lost or stolen. Plus, if we lay up our treasures in Heaven we'll have our heart there as well – and the Lord wants our heart to be centered on Heaven.

It's clear that it's possible to lay up treasures in Heaven. This means there must be some way to take our resources and move them into a Heavenly account. Not only is it *possible* to do this, but Jesus *commands* us to do this!

We've already discussed the idea of using worldly resources to accomplish something in Heaven when we discussed the story of the unrighteous servant. Jesus taught us that we should use our resources to help people so that in Heaven they'll invite us into their homes and reward us. There are also other ways to lay up rewards! For example, Matthew 10 says this:

**Matthew 10:40-42:** “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup

of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

In this passage Jesus discusses rewards for helping people who are in need. The actions that earn rewards don't have to be great: one example that Christ gives is simply giving a child a drink of cold water in His name. Those are the sort of actions that lay up treasures in Heaven.

Some people object to the idea of treasures in Heaven and claim that everyone will have the same thing and no one will be greater than anyone else. However, that's not what the Bible teaches! Take this passage as an example:

**Matthew 19:27-28:** “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Peter told Christ that His disciples had sacrificed everything to follow Him, and he wanted to know what their reward would be. If there were no rewards this would have been a great time for Jesus to correct Peter (and Jesus certainly didn't hesitate to correct Peter on other occasions!), but that's not what Jesus said. Instead of telling Peter that he was wrong to even think about rewards, Jesus told him that they would receive something special: they would become kings, sit on 12 thrones, and judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

Notice that there are only 12 of these thrones and they were only given to Christ's disciples<sup>1</sup>. This isn't something that

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1 I'm not suggesting that Judas is going to receive one of these thrones. Acts

will be given to everyone. You and I aren't going to be sitting on any of those 12 thrones! This means the idea that “everyone gets the same thing” is wrong because the disciples will be given an honor that no one else will have.

The apostle Paul reinforces this idea:

**I Corinthians 3:11-15:** “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he himself shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

The apostle Paul tells us that the works we do in this life will be put to the test. If a person's work endures (because it was the right sort of work) then he will be rewarded. If it does *not* endure then he “shall suffer loss” and will *not* be rewarded. This passage teaches us that it's possible for some people to be rewarded while others walk away empty-handed. This is a strong argument against the idea that everyone will be given the same thing.

It's possible to receive rewards in the life to come, and it's also possible to enter the next life and discover that you wasted your life and accomplished nothing. Christ Himself warned of this possibility:

**Luke 16:10-12:** “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

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1:26 tells us that Judas was replaced by Matthias.

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mannon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

God cares about our faithfulness! He notices those who are faithful and those who are faithless. This passage implies that only those who are faithful in earthly things will be entrusted with "true riches". *The Lord puts a difference between His faithful servants and His unfaithful servants!*

This warning is made even more plain in Matthew 24:

**Matthew 24:45-51:** "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here we find not just a faithless servant but an evil one. The Lord tells us about a master who came home and caught his servants in action. The servant who was caught being faithful was given a tremendous reward of greater responsibilities, higher honor, and deeper service. However, the wicked servant who was caught being faithless was fired. He lost his position and was thrown out with the hypocrites. He didn't find any joy at his

master's return. Instead he found only sorrow – and that's exactly what all of the wicked will find when the Lord Jesus returns. Those who reject Jesus in this life and refuse to serve Him will be cast into a terrible place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” – a place called Hell.

Luke 19 also discusses this same idea:

**Luke 19:12-27:** “He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my

money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they say unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

Once again we can see that the faithful servants were rewarded with even greater positions of authority! Instead of managing sums of money they were now responsible for managing *entire cities*. Their reward is completely out of proportion with their service! A relatively small act of faithfulness was rewarded with a tremendous, breathtaking reward.

The faithless servant had his position of service taken away from him and given to someone else. He was fired from his job and left with nothing. However, the person who received no reward wasn't one of the wicked. At the end of this passage the master commanded that all of the wicked were to be executed. That gives us three different categories: the faithful servants who were rewarded, the unfaithful servants who received no reward and lost their position, and the wicked who were executed.

The Bible tells us that God puts a *big* difference between the faithful and the faithless. He cares about what we do with our lives! After our death He either rewards us or doesn't reward us. This is *entirely different* from punishing sin. The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the punishment for all of our sin, and our sins have indeed been forgiven. When we die and stand before God we won't be punished for them. However, based on the way we lived our lives we may or may not be rewarded. Jesus commanded us to lay up treasures in Heaven, and if we refuse to do that then we have only ourselves to blame.