



# IMAGINE HEAVEN

## Judgments and Rewards

Part 6 of 6

Saturday, 10/31 at 4:00 | Sunday, 11/1 at 9:00

All Saints Day – 2020

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: This is the sixth and final part of the sermon series, Imagine Heaven. The series has included the following topics:

- ➔ Part 1 – Evidence of the Afterlife: What the Bible says about heaven **and** *what is going on NOW in heaven!*
- ➔ Part 2 – Relationships in Heaven: Troubles on earth; then being with ✦**Jesus** and ✦**our own** when we die!
- ➔ Part 3 – Beauty in Heaven: Sin led to the earth becoming corrupt, **but** *heaven is super-beautiful NOW!*
- ➔ Part 4 – The Highlight of Heaven: Jesus, His saving work, **and** *what He looks like NOW in heaven!*
- ➔ Part 5 – What about Hell? Its purpose and horrors; then our *thankfulness as believers* **and** *our concern for unbelievers!*

Today, *in part 6*, we will focus on ☞ what the Bible says about judgments, ☞ what the Bible says about rewards, and ☞ why God is calling each one of us to take loving action for others!

1. **What Is the Meaning of the Term *Judgment* (κρίσις, krisis)?** A judgment is simply a *decision*; however, when the judgment is unfavorable, it is called a *condemnation*.
  
2. **Three Important Judgments:**
  - a. Continuous – *God always knows what everyone believes!* <sup>NAU</sup> **John 3:18** [Jesus said:] “He who believes in [the Son of God] is not judged [condemned]; he who does not believe has been judged [condemned] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Therefore, every second of every day, God knows who **does** believe in Jesus and who **does not**; †those who keep believing in Jesus are *innocent in God’s sight*, while †those who keeping rejecting Jesus are *condemning themselves*.
  
  - b. At the time of death – *Each person’s soul and spirit are taken either to heaven or to hell, and will remain there until the return of Jesus!* Here are two examples:
    - i. **Heaven:** The criminal confessed his faith to Jesus, “...remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” [Then Jesus promised the criminal he would go to heaven when He said:] “...today you shall be with Me in Paradise [the third heaven]” (Lk. 23:42-43 NAU).
  
    - ii. **Hell:** “...the rich man [who expressed his unbelief through his total lack of concern for a poor man named Lazarus] also died and was

buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes  
[having some means of being able to see], being  
in torment” (Lk. 16:22-23 NAU).

- c. At the return of Jesus – Each person will be whole again – body, soul, and spirit; then each person will stand before Jesus, who will be seated on a **white throne**. He will determine if people are welcomed into heaven or cast into the lake of fire. The Bible says in **Revelation 20**: “Then I saw a great white throne and [Jesus] [Matt. 25:31; John 5:26-27] who sat upon it... And I saw the dead, the great and the small [thus everyone], standing before the throne, and **books** were opened; and **another book** was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged [evaluated] from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (11-13 NAU).
- i. Does that seem confusing? We confess faith alone, *and yet here the judgment is based on deeds*. How can we reconcile the two positions?
  - ii. Legitimate works can only come from saving faith; therefore, anyone who has a legitimate work also has saving faith!
  - iii. The Bible says: <sup>NAU</sup> **Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please [God]...

3. **What Is the Meaning of the Term *Reward* (μισθός, misthos):** A reward is compensation:

- a. In a positive sense, *it's given to those who – from **their faith** – do God's will.*
- b. In a negative sense, *a reward is payback for disobeying God's will.*

Going forward in this sermon, we will focus on the *positive* sense of the term.

4. **An Important Distinction Between Two Greek Words:**

- a. κρίσις (krisis) – Judgment – *as in the **white throne judgment** mentioned earlier:*
  - i. All who are trusting in Jesus will be judged innocent – *and welcomed into eternal bliss!*
  - ii. All who are rejecting Jesus will be judged guilty – *and sent away to eternal torment!*
- b. βῆμα (bema) – Judgment – *as in the **bema seat judgment**.* This judgment applies *only to those who believe in Jesus*. This judgment is similar to a judge in an ancient Olympic-type game; he watches the contest; then he determines the winner and gives the reward.
  - i. Regarding believers **who lived for Jesus** by **denying themselves** and **taking action** for the eternal benefit of others, *Jesus will reward them!*
  - ii. Regarding believers **who lived for themselves** by **not denying themselves**,

and **not** taking action for the eternal benefit of others, *they will lose their reward!*

## 5. **Some Key Passages on Rewards:**

- a. The OT speaks about the coming rewards:  
<sup>NAU</sup> **Isaiah 62:11** ... “Lo, your salvation comes; Behold His reward is with Him...”
- b. When will the rewards be given? When Jesus returns: <sup>NAU</sup> **Revelation 11:18** “...the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged, and *the time* to **reward** Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name...”
- c. All believers must appear before the bema seat:  
<sup>NAU</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment [βήματος] seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed [rewarded] for his deeds in the body [while living on earth], according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
- d. Which works will be rewarded? *The ones which pass the test of fire!* <sup>NAU</sup> **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** “Now if any man builds on the foundation [that is, on Jesus Christ] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day [the day of Jesus’ return] will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it [Jesus Christ] remains, he will receive a **reward**. If

any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." // "Imagine a person running out of a burning house—they're safe, but all they worked for just went up in smoke. What you do with your life really matters—every moment of this life matters more than you ever imagined."<sup>1</sup>

6. **Some Key Thoughts on Rewards:** These are quotes from chapter 18 of the book, *Imagine Heaven*:
- a. "No one else can see all those decisions made by faith each day, yet God records every one. He will one day reward them all."<sup>2</sup>
  - b. "Helping people find faith and grow spiritually might get you mocked or persecuted in the short run, but it will one day bring you great, great joy!"<sup>3</sup>
  - c. "When you build into others spiritually, no one may even notice or care—but God cares!"<sup>4</sup>

**Conclusion:** Good news *for all who know Jesus*; He said:  
<sup>NAU</sup> **John 5:24** "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him [*my Father*] who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment [*κρίσιν, condemnation*], but has passed out of death into life."

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<sup>1</sup> John Burke, *Imagine Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 258.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

Going forward from here: Let us realize God's goodness to us *financially* and *spiritually*:

- ✦ Financially: *We have been given much! "To be in the top 10 percent [of the wealthiest people in the world in 2015], a person needed to have only \$68,800 in wealth [assets minus debts]."*<sup>5</sup>
- ✦ Spiritually: We ➔ believe the Bible is God's Word **and** ➔ trust in Jesus alone as our Savior! Those two things are SO IMPORTANT, *and yet only 4% of the world holds to both of those teachings!* **WE ARE SO BLESSED!!**

So what are we going to do with our VAST financial and spiritual wealth?

- ✦ A financial thought: *"...all our money is Monopoly money... At the end of the game, it all goes back in the box. What lasts is how you played the game to honor God."*<sup>6</sup>
- ✦ A spiritual thought: When we share what we believe:
  - We will grow in our understanding!
  - Others may be set free from their sins!
  - We will receive an eternal reward!

**Let Us Pray:** Dear Father in heaven:

- ✦ For every sin – *thank You for Your gift of forgiveness!*
- ✦ For our financial and spiritual resources – *thank You for Your amazing generosity!*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-richest-people-in-the-world-20160121-story.html>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 265.

- ✚ For every opportunity we have missed to serve Jesus – *thank You that our lives on earth are not yet over!*
- ✚ And for all present and future opportunities to make an eternal difference – *empower us and move us to seize them unto Your glory!*

**Book Reminder:** Imagine Heaven is available in the Narthex; to cover the cost, please put an extra \$10 in the offering plate. Thanks!